

CONTESSA TERESA GUICCIOLI

From a drawing by D'Orsay

in the possession

of the author

IRIS ORIGO

THE LAST ATTACHMENT

The story of Byron and Teresa Guiccioli as told in their unpublished letters and other family papers



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INTRODUCTION

> I have lived in far countries, abroad, or in the agitating world at home . . . so that almost all I have written has been mere passion—passion, it is true, of different kinds, but always passion: for . . . my *indifference* was a kind of passion, the result of experience, and not the philosophy of nature. BYRON

Three years after Byron's death, the Contessa Teresa Guiccioli—the object of the poet's last, longest and perhaps deepest attachment—wrote to Barry that his letters to her were 'a treasure of goodness, affection and genius, which for a hundred reasons I cannot now make public'.[1] Thirty years later, however, roused to indignation by reading Leigh Hunt's malicious book, *Lord Byron and his Contemporaries,* she told John Murray that she did not care what the consequences to her own reputation might be, 'so long as none of the documents and letters are lost, which can reveal the great and kind heart of Lord Byron in its true light'.[2] And finally, on her deathbed in Italy in 1873, she is said to have expressed to her sister-in-law her desire that *all* her papers should be published. 'The more Byron is known' she said, 'the better he will be loved.'[3]

Since then seventy-five years have passed. And now owing to the courtesy of Count Carlo Gamba, Teresa's great nephew,—to whom she left her villa at Settimello and all its contents—Teresa's papers and treasures have at last come to light. The treasures—Byron's 'relics', as she called them—still lie in the carved mahogany box in which Teresa kept them. There is the locket containing her hair, and hung on a chain of her hair, which Byron was wearing when he died, and which Augusta Leigh sent back to her; there is another locket, containing Byron's hair, which he gave to Teresa when he sailed for Greece. There, too, carefully wrapped up by Teresa, with an inscription in her writing, lies a curious,

moving assortment of objects: a piece of the wall-hangings of the room in the Palazzo Gamba where Byron used to visit Teresa, Byron's handkerchief and a fragment of one of his shirts,—and a crumbling rose-leaf, with the branch of a tree and a small acorn, from Newstead Abbey. Finally there is a fat little volume bound in purple plush: the copy of *Corinne* in which he wrote his famous love-letter to Teresa in Bologna.

The papers in this collection have proved to be as exciting and interesting a hoard as the most exacting biographer could hope for. They include, not only 149 of Byron's love-letters, mostly in Italian, to Teresa, and some of her answers, but Teresa's 'Vie de Lord Byron',—her unpublished account of his life in Italy, which she wrote in her old age and thought too intimate to be published during her lifetime. In addition there are the documents of the Guiccioli lawsuits, containing a complete account of the complicated circumstances which led to Teresa's separation from her husband, and there are Pietro Gamba's letters to his sister from Greece, besides many other letters to her from Shelley, Lady Blessington, Lamartine, John Murray and others. In short, we have at last—with all the gaps filled in by information at which, until now, it was only possible to guess—the full story of Byron and Teresa Guiccioli.

It is not—this must be admitted—a wholly pleasant story, and it is one which it is difficult to tell impartially. There is a temptation [illegible] es: either to portray Byron as an unscrupulous cad, seducing a pretty young woman who had fallen desperately in love with him, laughing at her in his letters to his friends, and gradually cooling off, to leave her abandoned and alone; or, alternatively, to depict Teresa as a designing minx, who, tired of her elderly husband and her dreary provincial life, flung herself at Byron's head until he was perforce obliged to turn a fugitive love-affair into a 'romance in the Anglo fashion'. Or else the whole affair could be presented in the manner of a Goldonian Comedy —with the audience's sympathy focused on the two lovers, and with Count Guiccioli (the avaricious, calculating husband) as the villain, Fanny Silvestrini as the obliging con-

fidante, Count Ruggero as the noble father, and Pietro as the young gallant. Even the minor parts could be allotted—the venal priest, the maid, the Moorish page-boy,—and, in the pine-forest of Ravenna, the chorus of conspirators.

But now, with these new papers before us, none of these simplified versions will do. The actors too often speak out of part—and the story that emerges is too full of discrepancies and inconsistencies. Besides, there are a few minor points which, to my mind, even now remain obscure. I am still not quite certain about the motives of Count Guiccioli; I do not know what Byron meant by his incomplete letter on page 215; I am not always sure when Teresa is, or is not, speaking the truth. The reader, too, must guess and draw his own conclusions. I have merely attempted to fill in the background—to complete the story with passages from Byron's other letters at the time or from the accounts of his contemporaries, and to give such information as seemed necessary about the people, the setting and the local history. But I have carefully refrained from adding any imaginary details or touches of 'local colour': any information that the book contains can be confirmed by some record.

For it is the papers themselves—the scribbled, passionate love-letters, the painstaking police reports, the formal ecclesiastical decrees, the gossip of observant contemporaries—that must tell the story. They provide a singularly intimate and unvarnished account of the daily life of this little group of people, 130 years ago. Their passionate protestations, their jokes, their retractions and lies, their plans and disappointments, all that constituted the most private aspect of their lives—these are now laid before us in merciless detail. Now, after more than a century, we can follow the negro page carrying Teresa's notes to Byron up the staircase of Palazzo Guiccioli, or stand with the groom Morelli, watching by the front door to warn the lovers of the Count's return. We can look out from Teresa's balcony in Palazzo Lanfranchi in the moonlight—and Mary Shelley's carriage is clattering up the Lungarno, and she is calling out, 'Sapete alcuna cosa di Shelley?' We are in Teresa's sitting-room in

Casa Saluzzo, and Byron comes in, very cross, and gives her an unpleasant letter for Mary—and when he has gone out again, she turns it over and over and peers at the seal, and does not dare to look inside. We are with Byron—bored and flat and sad—on the *Hercules* in Leghorn harbour, and Pietro Gamba is standing over him with a pen, to make him write to Teresa his last meagre letter of farewell.

Here is the story of two passionate, unstable human beings —one of them a great poet, and a very odd man—the other a young woman of quite exceptional vitality and strength of will. They loved each other, they quarrelled; they trampled ruthlessly on whatever stood in their way. Of the two of them it was, curiously enough, Byron who occasionally played the moralist. Teresa, for all her convent-school training, appears to have been unaware throughout that any moral problem was involved. They committed themselves, and they drew back again. One of them was often disloyal, the other sometimes insincere. Each of them in turn—Byron in Ravenna, Teresa in the English circle in Pisa—had to conform, for the other's sake, to the ways of a bewildering and alien society. As time wore on, one of them became plaintive, the other exasperated. But at all times they were quite extraordinarily alive. They galvanized everyone who came near them. In these letters, they are living still.

Moreover these papers light up a facet of Byron's character which until now, has been unfamiliar: they show him living in an *Italian* setting. And the extent to which these new surroundings affected and changed him appears in a manner which is not only interesting, but sometimes disconcerting.

Byron himself, indeed, tried to tell his friends about it:

> Now I have *lived* among the Italians,—not *Florenced* and *Romed* and Galleried and Conversationed it for a few months, and then home again—but been of their families, and friendships and feuds, and loves and councils, and correspondence, in a part of Italy least known to foreigners; and have been amongst them of all classes, from the Conte to the Contadino. But neither his friends at the time, nor his bio-

graphers, paid much attention to all this. His life in Ravenna has been treated merely as a part of the whole paraphernalia of conspiracy and romance in which the histrionic side of his nature delighted: one more scene in the great Italian performance, like the quarrels with the Fornarina, or the swim across the Venetian Lagoon. But now it has become apparent that this was not the whole truth. If in Venice he was still the 'Englishman in Italy', a foreigner playing a part, in Ravenna he had been 'inoculated into a family. This', he added, 'is to see men and things as they are.'[5]

It is. But it can only be achieved at a price. In this case, it implied nothing less than a partial change of personality—a change which no reader who compares Byron's Italian letters with his English ones, can feel to be for the better. It is not that they are written in bad Italian. Although they are the letters of a foreigner, they are also unmistakably those of a man of letters, and they contain certain amusing indications as to where and how he learned his Italian: a Dantesque expression or a quotation from Tasso stand beside a Venetian phrase, straight from the mouth of the Fornarina, or a piece of *romagnolo* dialect What is disconcerting about these early letters is that their elaboration of phrase and conventionality of idiom are matched by an almost equal, a wholly un-Byronic, conventionality of sentiment. At first indeed, this is so marked that one is inclined to wonder whether this is not merely Byron overplaying his part; perhaps, in his desire to be the perfect *Cavalier Servente* in the Italian manner, he has copied some phrases outright from a polite letter-writer's manual of Venice—or has allowed not only single words (as he frankly admits), but whole sentences, to be suggested by Lega Zambelli, the priest turned secretary. 'Sentiment, the most beautiful and fragile thing in all our existence.' How much happier than I is this letter, which in a few days will be in your hands—and perhaps even will be brought close to your lips.' 'When I weep, my tears are from the heart, and are of blood.' These are not sentences which, if we encountered them without a signature, we should ever guess to be Byron's. As the correspondence goes on, it is true, such sen-

tences become less frequent. Not only does he gain a greater ease in the use of the Italian language, but he allows himself a lighter touch, more recognizably his own. 'It would suit me better to be with you in a desert, than without you in Mahomet's paradise, which is considerably more agreeable than ours.'—'I kiss you more often than I have ever kissed you—and this (if Memory does not deceive me) should be a fine number of times, counting from the beginning.'—But still, I think the reader will agree that the writer of these letters is an unfamiliar Byron.[6]

For one thing, he is more deeply involved. If the adventure started like many others, with a mixture of physical attraction and contempt—if, indeed, he was faintly irritated, as well as flattered, by this new silly young woman who threw herself at his head—the relationship very soon changed, and held him. Its progress is revealed in these letters. But here, too, it is curious to note that the feeling, although quite unmistakably genuine, is all within the Italian convention of the period. Passion, jealousy, storms, reconciliations, protestations of eternal fidelity ('your friend and lover forever', is the most frequent signature)—it is all to English ears, curiously *formal*. What is odd in these earlier letters, too, is a total absence of his usual flippancy and irony—with which, however, he made sufficiently free in his letters *about* the affair, to his friends at home. Teresa did not either like or understand irony; and though occasionally, in the later letters, Byron does laugh at her, it is as one smiles at a child, who will not share the joke.

What is the explanation of all this? I think it is to be found in Teresa's own character. Teresa was in some ways—like Caroline Lamb and Augusta—a *silly* woman; but she was not a stupid one; and she had all the strength of a one-track mind. From the moment that her passion for Byron held her, she knew what she wanted, and it was a foregone conclusion that she would get it. She persuaded her father, a simple and upright country gentleman, that nothing was wrong in her relations with Byron, long after the evidence of his senses must have told him the contrary. She defeated the compli-

cated manœuvres, and stood up to the brutality and violence, of her husband. She imposed an acceptance of the situation (however much people might gossip behind her back) on the whole tight little society of Ravenna, and even on her own correct, affectionate, family circle. And finally, she imposed her will upon Byron himself. He struggled, he grumbled, he tried to laugh at her; but in the end, he did what she wanted. 'I have come, I have gone—I have come back, I have remained—it is more than a year that I have done nothing but obey you in every respect.' Moreover she succeeded in shaping this relationship according to *her* standards, *her* view of life. For in such cases it is always the narrower, but more positive, purpose that wins.

There is an interesting account, in the diary of one of the most assiduous of Byron's Venetian friends, the Cavaliere Mengaldo, of how he once visited Byron's 'Casino' at Santa Maria Zobenigo. What shocked him, although he was himself no Puritan, was the casualness of Byron's affairs. 'Je fus effrayé de son horrible système!' The Latin convention in the pursuit of pleasure, as in domesticity, is a strict one—and it was Byron's refusal to conform to it that so profoundly scandalized his Venetian observers. But in the end he too was caught. A girl of nineteen, by her very limitations, her unawareness of any other world than that familiar to her, translated their passion into the only language that she knew—and her lover (first, we suspect, as a joke, a *tour de force*, then in all seriousness—and finally, as a habit) made it his language, too. He became—this was what shocked and disconcerted Mrs. Hunt and Mary Shelley so much—Italianized.

What was the quality in Teresa which—in spite of her inexperience, her lack of sensitiveness and her silliness—enabled her to achieve all this? It hardly seems worth while to examine in detail the controversy about her looks. From her contemporaries we have, on the one hand, such distressing adjectives as 'chumpy' and 'fubsy'—while, on the other hand, Shelley thought her 'very pretty', Lady Blessington, 'decidedly handsome . . . Her complexion delicately fair, her hair of rich golden tint, her bust and arms exquisitely

beautiful'; and Lord Malmesbury, 'handsome, with a brilliant complexion' and 'a profusion of auburn hair'. Undoubtedly, at the time she met Byron, we must grant her brilliancy of colour and complexion—what Jane Austen called 'bloom'—fine eyes and teeth, and beautiful arms and bust. But her legs were too short. The real point, however, is not what her looks were, but what Byron thought of them. He thought her 'fair as sunrise—warm as noon'—as pretty as Caroline Lamb and much gentler—and endearingly funny, too, in her sky-blue riding-habit and her hat like Punch's.

But in any case, the strength of physical attraction is not dependent only—or even chiefly—upon looks. Teresa and Byron *suited* each other—as to that there can be no question. Every line of the correspondence confirms this; even in the later phase, when weariness and exasperation had crept in, there remain the little jokes of physical intimacy, half-unintelligible to any reader but one—and the pervading sense that, whatever else went wrong, *that* remained all right.

But even the most delightful physical relation is not, by itself, enough; the evenings, as Byron wrote at La Mira, always seem longer than the nights. What else was it in Teresa he showed the same half-humorous, half-mocking sheer vitality, her youthful high spirits. To self-conscious, complex human beings, there is something extremely restful in the company of people less highly organized than themselves—and Teresa possessed to the full not only the freshness and zest of youth, but a certain childlike ruthlessness, a quality which Byron always found attractive. Life with her was uncomplicated, gay and exciting. If she sometimes talked affected nonsense, it was the kind of nonsense that he found diverting—perhaps even, at first, a little touching;—and then it was leavened by so unlimited an admiration, so unrestrained a devotion! '*Mio* Byron!'

In some ways Byron's love for Teresa more closely resembled his feeling for Augusta, than what he felt for any other woman—and perhaps it was just for this reason that their relationship lasted for so long. To both Augusta and Teresa that attracted him so strongly? I think it was her

tenderness; with both of them he found the release from self-consciousness that brought him gaiety and peace. For Byron did not want women to understand him: Annabella had understood him, and what had that led to? He wanted them to amuse him. 'I ask nothing of a woman but to make me laugh,' he had brutally told his wife in the first days of their marriage. 'I can make Augusta laugh about anything. No one makes me happy except Augusta.'[8] And to Augusta herself, he wrote about Teresa: 'She has a good deal of *us*, too. I mean that turn for ridicule like Aunt Sophy and you and I and all the B.s.'[9] Teresa's absurdities, too, were just the kind that Augusta would enjoy: 'She is an equestrian, too, but . . . she can't guide her horse—and he runs after mine—and tries to bite him—and then she begins screaming in a high hat and sky-blue riding-habit—making a most absurd figure.'[10] She was as silly as Augusta—and amoral, too, in very much the same way. Like her, she could not really believe that anything was wrong that did not cause anyone any pain—and she continued to be kind, even to the people she was deceiving. Byron used, in writing to her, the same symbol, the +, that he had used with Augusta. 'Ah,' he had said on one occasion, showing Augusta this mark in Annabella's presence, 'if she knew what *that* means.'[11] And to Teresa, after making use of this symbol for the first time, he wrote, 'There can be few crosses more holy for us than these.'

But Teresa, for all this, was only partly like Augusta. She had, as I think these papers show, far greater *staying power*: she had more guts, and—for all her sentimentality—more sense. It is now necessary, I think, to reconsider the previous estimate of her. 'The nice, pretty girl without pretensions, good hearted and amiable', of Mary Shelley's description, is evidently not enough; and still less Leigh Hunt's 'buxom parlour-boarder, composing herself artificially into dignity and elegance'.[12] (For Teresa had snubbed Mrs. Hunt.) 'Stupid,' says Miss Mayne, 'at once insensitive and sentimental . . . so obtuse that he could not shake her off.'[13] 'Insincère,' says her husband's grandson, Alessandro Guiccioli, 'with more calculation than sentiment, cold, selfish and com-

fort-loving.'[14] In all these opinions there is, perhaps, a grain of truth. But I think that Drinkwater was nearer to it when he spoke of Teresa as 'a woman of more quality and character than history has commonly realized',—and above all when he said, of Byron's love for her, 'He talked at times as if this was not so, but then he talked at times as if everything was not so that was . . . He had, on the whole, a more genuine and lasting respect for her than he had for any other woman in his life.'[15]

These new papers confirm this assertion. Byron's early letters have a quite unmistakable note of genuine passion; and as, in the later letters, passion fades, it is replaced by a semi-conjugal bond of half-humorous, resigned acceptance. Teresa's answers show, in the midst of much flowery rhetoric and exasperating romanticism, an equal passion, and unexpected flashes of both insight and shrewdness. They show, above all, an unquestioning, disinterested devotion, which, in the long years in which she survived him, continued to manifest itself in a fierce and irrepressible loyalty. Leigh Hunt, in his spiteful record of his own grievances, professed to believe that, during the last year at Pisa and Genoa, Byron found this devotion so cloying that Teresa at last became aware that he was tired of her. 'In the course of a few months, she seemed to have lived as many years.'[16] Mr. Harold Nicholson clearly implies that by then she had become nothing but an obstacle and a burden. I think that the truth was rather more complicated than this. To Lady Blessington, before leaving for Greece, he admitted that he was 'worn out in feelings'—but at the same time he added, perhaps not without a wry smile, that if he and Teresa could be married, they would be cited as an example of conjugal happiness'. This passage, in Teresa's own copy of Lady Blessington's book, is heavily underscored—and in the margin she has written 'God bless him!'

The letters of Byron and Teresa, as well as the greater part of the 'Vie de Lord Byron', are almost wholly concerned with the two lovers' personal affairs, and throw but little light on

the other side of Byron's life in Ravenna:—his part in the Italian revolutionary movement. But in the other sources I have consulted—the minute and detailed police reports of the day, the archives of the Vatican and of Venice, Bologna, Ravenna, Florence, Forlì and Pisa, the contemporary Memoirs of the Carbonari, and the works of Italian scholars,—a good deal of information about Byron's political activity has come to light. This new information suggests that his part in the Romagna rising was greater than has generally been realized —and was actuated by very much the same motives as his expedition to Greece. Had he remained in Italy a few years longer and met a *Sanfedista* bullet in the insurrection of 1831, he might have been the hero of the Italian war of independence, instead of that of Greece. As it is, his activities in Italy have always been slightly slurred over, or dismissed, while his Greek venture has been thrown into the limelight.

One reason for this comparative neglect is that the whole emphasis of his biographers, in writing of his life in Ravenna, has always been upon his liaison with Teresa—or upon his literary work during this period. Another reason is that the documents about the Carbonari are in Italian and are not easy to find. Moreover the most interesting, for British readers, has disappeared. This was Byron's own account of the Carboneria, and of his share in the Romagna insurrection—the notes, presumably, which he had in mind when he wrote in 1821: 'Some day or other, if dust holds together, I have been enough in the Secret (at least in this part of the country) to cast perhaps some little light upon the atrocious treachery which has replunged Italy into Barbarism.'[17] These notes, together with some others on more personal matters, he handed over in July 1823, as he was sailing from Leghorn, to his Venetian friend Mengaldo—presumably not liking to put such dangerous papers into the hands of the Gambas, who were about to return to the Romagna. Mengaldo, however, burned the whole envelope, unopened, 'on the shores of the Adriatic'—and with it, all that Byron could have told us about the secrets of the Carbonari.[18]

But, even without these notes, it is now possible to form a

fairly accurate picture both of the activities of the Carbonari in the Romagna and of the degree to which Byron shared in them. Various Italian writers have taken some pains to prove —on quite insufficient evidence—that Byron's participation in the Italian struggle for liberty was a mere consequence of his having been, as they affirm, a Freemason. They attempt to link up his activity in the Romagna with his previous meetings with the Liberal intellectuals in Milan (Pellegrino Rossi, Lodovico di Breme, Silvio Pellico) and, on the other hand, with his subsequent venture in Greece. This was also the line taken in the reports of the Austrian and Papal police, which described the English Mylord as a sinister emissary of England, seeking to extend English Liberal influence (like Lord Bentinck in Sicily) in order to sap the power of the Holy Alliance all over the Continent.

All this, however, presupposes a complete misconception of Byron's attitude to public matters. He was in politics a dilettante, an aristocrat at odds with society, an intellectual with a strong partiality for liberty. But this partiality was not attached to any definite political structure; it was merely a personal taste. As Bertrand Russell pertinently remarks, 'the freedom he praised was that of a German Prince or a Cherokee Chief, not the inferior sort that might conceivably be enjoyed by ordinary mortals'.[19] When he found himself, as he did in the Romagna, in a country ruled by a despotic and oppressive government, his sympathies went out, in a typically English and amateurish fashion, to that section of society which was oppressed, while at the same time, in Italy as in Greece, his historical imagination was fired by the idea of a renascence of the two great nations of the past. 'Only think, a free Italy! Why, 'tis the very poetry of politics.'[20] But it was in him—although leavened by the practical common sense which he showed again in Greece*—a poet's vision, not a statesman's.

In actual prosaic fact, the risings in the Romagna were not a very important episode. The anxious police spies who

* 'If there was one quality that characterized Byron more than another, it was his solid common sense.'—Disraeli.

opened Byron's letters and dogged his footsteps were correct in considering him one of the moving spirits of the conspiracy; but the plan was wholly dependent on concerted action in the South, and it fizzled out the moment the Neapolitan army was dispersed. Nevertheless Byron was right in saying that 'the more selfish calculation ought never to be made on such occasions. . . .'

'It is not one man nor a million, but the *spirit* of liberty that must be preserved. The waves which dash upon the shore are, one by one, broken, but the *ocean* conquers nevertheless. It overwhelms the Armada, it wears the rock. In like manner, whatever the struggle of individuals, the great cause will gather strength.'[21]

Mr. Harold Nicolson has gone so far as to affirm that, if Byron had deserted the Hellenic cause, there would have been no Navarino. It would perhaps be rash to make a similar claim for the poet's influence on the Risorgimento—largely because he did not have the good fortune to die in Italy. But certainly in Italy, as in Greece, the results of Byron's intervention were entirely disproportionate to the immediate achievement: he came to be 'more important as a myth, than as he really was'.[22] The rising in which he took part was only a minor affair, but it was one of the first faint rumblings which, all over Europe, heralded the great revolutionary storm of 1848; and Byron's name is still remembered by Italians, as that of a friend of Italy and of her freedom.

Finally, the part that Byron played in Italy was important to *himself*. One of the ingredients was, of course, a certain pleasure in the whole *mise en scène*: he enjoyed the encounters in the Pineta with the bands of conspirators who cheered him as he rode by; he enjoyed the 'camaraderie' of their banquets—slightly spurious, for what would he have said if his friendship with them had entailed his giving up a single one of his privileges as 'Pari d'Inghilterra'? He remained with them, too, the 'Cherokee Chief'. He liked to write home about the danger of receiving a stiletto in his back, about secret plots and documents, and weapons concealed in his cellar.

And beneath all this, there was something more. The motive which underlay the Italian venture and the Greek one was the same: a desire for rehabilitation in the eyes of his fellow-countrymen. The 'tremulous web of sensitiveness' which Moore had already noted—the constant preoccupation with English opinion which Lady Blessington was to observe* —is already evident in the pages of the *Ravenna Journal*. The smallest scrap of news from England, indeed, the slightest breath of approval or criticism, had for Byron a *reality* which nothing in his life abroad ever acquired. In vain did he declare that he had shaken off the dust of the country which had misunderstood and insulted him; in vain did he achieve fame and success all over the Continent. Never could he rid himself of the nagging conviction that the only true criterion of fame and success, the only true achievement, lay in the opinion of Englishmen, at home. Always he remained what he called himself in signing the visitor's book in the Armenian monastery at Venice: 'Lord Byron, inglese.'

This constant preoccupation with English opinion is, perhaps, the key to all his public behaviour abroad. 'If I live,' he told Lady Blessington (and Teresa has marked the passage in the margin), 'and return from Greece with something better and higher than the reputation or glory of a poet, opinions may change, as the successful are always judged favourably of in our country; my laurels may cover my faults better than the bays have done.'[28] For Byron had to the full the intellectual's admiration for the man of action. 'A man', he told Teresa, 'ought to do more for society than write verses.' And elsewhere he had written: 'If I live ten years longer, you will see, however, that it is not over with me—I don't mean in literature, for that is nothing; and it may

* 'Tremblingly alive to the censure or opinions of persons for whom he entertains little respect.' 'Byron seems to take a pleasure in censuring England and its customs, yet it is evident to me that he rails at it and them as a lover does at the failure of his mistress . . . Why talk so much and so constantly of his country, if he felt that in [illegible] hatred to it which he professes?' LADY BLESSINGTON, *The Idler in Italy*, p. 167.

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seem odd enough to say, I do not think it my vocation.'[24] When in the *Ravenna Journal,* on his thirty-third birthday, he deplores the passing of the years, not 'so much for what I have done, as for what I *might* have done,'[25] it was not of literary achievement that he was thinking. It was—at Ravenna as at Missolonghi—a 'nobler aim'. The Italian venture —undertaken with a similar mixture of motives, a similar irresolution and conflict, fraught with a similar exasperation with the people whose cause he was defending—was the prelude to the Greek tragedy.

My deepest gratitude is due to Conte Carlo Gamba for his permission, not only to consult and transcribe Contessa Guiccioli's papers, which form the basis of this book, but to examine her books and treasures, and to visit her villa at Settimello. I am also indebted to him for permission to reproduce the Bartolini bust of Contessa Guiccioli and the facsimile of Byron's and Contessa Guiccioli's letters.

I am also most grateful to the Contessa Emmy Calderara Cini for permission to reproduce the drawing of Byron and the pastel picture of the Villa Gamba at Filetto.

In addition to the Gamba papers, I have consulted a number of other unpublished papers, which are listed in Appendix I. For permission to examine these, I am indebted first of all to Monsignor Mercati, Prefect of the Archivo Segreto of the Vatican Library, for allowing me to consult the documents of the 'Sacra Rota', to the Committee and the Librarian of the Keats-Shelley Memorial in Rome, Signora Vera Cacciatore, for letting me make use of books and unpublished papers in that library; to the Trustees and to the Librarian of the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York, for permission to quote from several letters of Byron's, Contessa Guiccioli's and Alexander Scott's. I also wish to express my warm gratitude to Conte and Contessa Pasolini dall'Onda, who have allowed me to quote passages from papers in their family archives at Ravenna and to borrow some rare books from their library, and who have helped me with much interesting information.

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The Last Attachment

I cannot exist without some object of attachment.
Byron to Lady Melbourne, 1813

I can hope no more to inspire attachment, and I trust never again to feel it
Byron to Hoppner, 1819

PROLOGUE

> On ne saurait s'y prendre de trop de façons, et par trop de bouts, pour connaître un homme.
>
> SAINTE-BEUVE

'On the happy occasion of the Espousals arranged and concluded between the Cavaliere Commendatore Alessandro Guiccioli and the Contessa Teresa Gamba Ghiselli daughter of Conte Ruggero, both of this city, it has been thought desirable to put on record the dowry assigned by Conte Ruggero to his aforesaid Daughter, as well as to establish the rules that will govern their future union. . . .

In view of this Marriage Conte Ruggero Gamba Ghiselli, having come before this Notary Public and in the presence of Witnesses . . . has assigned and made over to his Daughter Contessa Teresa the dowry of scudi 4500. . . .

The Cavaliere promises and guarantees to his Spouse the Contessa in case of her Widowhood—which God avert—a decent and comfortable provision from the Guiccioli Fortune, so long as she leads a Widow's life, and the interest on her dowry remains with the Guiccioli family. . . .'[1]

This marriage contract, drawn up in the little provincial town of Ravenna in the Romagna, on January 20th, 1818, is the beginning of the story.

Forty years lay between the bride and bridegroom,[2] and they had met for the first time three months before, when the bride had just come home from school. The second of Count Gamba's five pretty daughters, she was, by all accounts, the most attractive, and moreover the prize pupil of S. Chiara, the new-fangled convent school at Faenza—which had been opened during the recent French domination. Here—although she was something of a little hoyden, quick-tempered and vain and, her schoolfellows whispered, extremely ambitious[3]

—Teresa had received an education exceptional for a girl of her time. The Abbess, Madre Rampi,—a woman of great character—had decided to create a model establishment, in which girls (almost as if they were boys) would be given *une éducation forte*, comprising not only an appreciation of the classic authors of their own language, but a thorough training in the arts of eloquence and rhetoric. The school, indeed, was closed a few years later by the Church, on the grounds that so much learning was dangerous for women; but meanwhile its pupils had learned how to hold a conversation about Dante or Petrarch, and how to write letters in a style from which every trace of simplicity and naturalness was eliminated. Moreover at home Teresa had also enjoyed the teaching of her brother's professor, Paolo Costa, who had imparted to her, as well as a love of literature, the rudiments of philosophy. She was, in short, a very well-educated young lady indeed, and aware of it; and perhaps this helped her to face with equanimity the prospect of marriage with a man who, whatever his faults (and it is not likely that much of the gossip had reached her ears), was known to be the wittiest and most cultivated man in Ravenna, who had been a friend of Alfieri's, and was a patron of the theatre. Teresa, her sisters whispered enviously, would have her own box at the Opera—had not the Ravenna theatre been restored largely at the Count's expense?—she would have a fine house, with many servants in livery, including two 'mori' in rich Oriental costumes, with pistols and daggers at their belts; she would drive in the Carnival cavalcade in a coach-and-six preceded by outriders with blue and white feathers in their caps. Besides, says the Count's grandson, 'my grandfather was a handsome man, vigorous, rich, intelligent, agreeable in conversation, skilled in seduction, of fine manners and illustrious family'.[4] What more could a girl desire? And so, on a late autumn evening of the year 1817, a curious little scene took place in the drawing-room of Palazzo Gamba.

A gentle, blushing girl of eighteen, with a poor figure, but a brilliant complexion and a mass of lovely auburn hair, stood in the middle of the room, curtsying, as her father

introduced her to a rigid elderly man with red hair and whiskers, whom she had never seen before. The room was ill-lit, and the future bridegroom was short-sighted. Without a word, he took a candle in his hand, and with a faint smile on his thin lips he slowly walked round the girl, examining her points 'as if about to buy a piece of furniture'.[5] The next day the bargain was concluded.

The bridegroom, according to all accounts, was an expert in bargains, and—since this was his third marriage—presumably knew what he required. To form a picture of his character it will perhaps be fairest to turn first to the evidence of a completely impartial observer—one who had nothing to do with the Byron affair—the Vice Legate of Ravenna, who in 1827 sent a report about the Count to the Head of the Austrian police.

'The Cavaliere Guiccioli', the report begins, 'belongs to one of the patrician families of this city. Possessed of uncommon talents and a subtle intelligence, he was given an education suitable to his rank. While still young he lost his Father, who left him only a moderate fortune, and that in poor condition. He then married the Contessa Placidia Zinanni, who made up for the disparity of her age—much greater than that of the Cavaliere—and for her physical imperfections, by a very large dowry.'[6]

This dowry her husband immediately put to good use, 'in such a manner as to attain the level of the other good families of the city'; while for his wife's instruction—and subsequently, for that of her successors—he prepared a series of 'maxims', enlightening her as to the behaviour he expected of her:

'Let her determine always to be a solace to me, and never a trouble; she should therefore always be cheerful with me, annoy no one in the house, ask politely for anything she wishes, but accept in silence any refusal.

'Let her be satisfied with modest amusements and suitable provision.

'Let her be true and frank, so that she will have no mysteries from me, and that I may always see into her heart, but let her be prudent in handing on my confidences to others.

'Let her be docile and ready to execute all my directions.

'Let her be faithful and beware of any appearances to the contrary.'

Of his own side of the contract nothing is said—and we shall see later on how he interpreted it.

In 1797 the Napoleonic Army and its revolutionary ideas invaded the Romagna; and Count Guiccioli began to play a part in the public life of the Province. Many of the Ravenna patricians—among them Count Ruggero Gamba, Teresa's father—at once ardently and sincerely adhered to the Jacobin cause. They set up in the Piazza a Tree of Liberty—a thirty-foot pole painted with the national colours, and crowned with a Republican bonnet and a laurel wreath—and burned at the foot of it the 'Golden Book' containing their own titles of nobility, while making speeches 'full of high-sounding phrases'.[7] Others—like Monaldo Leopardi of Recanati, the poet's father, who wrote of Napoleon that it was 'too great an honour for such a blackguard that a gentleman should rise to see him pass'—shut themselves up in their palaces or in their country-houses until the storm had passed.[8] But the most prudent—and Count Guiccioli was their leader—trimmed their sails to the wind 'The only alternative now left to a gentleman', he wrote in his notebook, 'is either to have his head cut off by the *canaille,* or to put himself at their head; I prefer the second.'[9]

His decision bore immediate fruit. When the Romagna was united to the Provinces of the Cisalpine Republic, Guiccioli was made President of the Central Administration of the Province; he became a deputy of the Cisalpine Council; he attended Napoleon's coronation in Milan cathedral. Then, in 1814, after the fall of Napoleon, the French left the Romagna; and a rumour was spread that the English intended to create in Italy an independent State.* The extreme Repub-

* PARINI, *op. cit.*, p. 46. 'These rumours were spread in every corner where the English set foot, and were backed up by pro-

licans rejoiced, but more prudent citizens, like Guiccioli, bided their time—and indeed, within a few weeks, the Pope himself was in Ravenna on his way back to Rome. The same crowd which had danced round the Tree of Liberty now unharnessed the Papal coach and drew it in triumph down the Corso, while hundreds thronged, in tears, to ask for the Pope's blessing and kiss his foot; and a Papal Edict published at Cesena promised 'happiness to His faithful subjects'. Before the year was out, the Papal Government—entrusted to two Cardinal Legates, one with his See at Ravenna, the other at Forlì—was firmly re-established in the Romagna.

And in this return to the old order, too, Count Guiccioli found himself at home. Always a correct and conventional churchman and an upholder of 'law and order', besides possessing an elegant tongue and a sharp wit, he was soon upon excellent terms with the prelates of the Cardinal's court. He had, however, his troubles. In his attempts to restore the family fortunes, he had bought a great deal of land, with insufficient cash to pay for it: he had recourse to borrowing; and soon he found himself involved in a very unpleasant lawsuit (the first of many) with a certain Domenico Manzoni, a rich landowner of Forlì. Manzoni won the case, and Guiccioli was shut up for several months in the prisons of Castel Sant'Angelo in Rome.

When he came out again, he continued 'through the practice of a careful economy', to add successfully to his fortune—but the sudden and mysterious assassination of Manzoni caused some unpleasant rumours to be circulated, which were still current gossip in Venice five years later.

'They are liberal with the knife in R[a]', wrote Byron with some gusto to Hobhouse, 'and the Cavaliere Conte G.—is shrewdly suspected of two assassinations already, one of a certain Mazzoni [*sic*], who had been the cause of Count G.'s being put in the castle of St. Angelo for some dispute or

clamations, promises, and speeches by the principal actors in the scene, among whom [illegible] Bentinck deserves special mention.'

other, the which Mazzoni [*sic*], soon after G.'s release, was stabbed going to the theatre and killed upon the spot, *nobody knows by whom*—and the other, of a commissary who had interfered with him. These are but *dicerie* and may be true or not'.[10]

The chief interest of this story—true or false—lies in the light it throws upon the Count's popularity and reputation. And, indeed, as the story goes on, it does not become prettier.

'During his marriage', says the Vice Legate's report, 'with the aforesaid Contessa Placidia, he used to keep in his house a series of maids, whom he seduced and then changed and sent away, according to circumstances and to the greater or lesser resentment of his wife.' One of these, Angelica Galliani, 'a young woman of some attractions'—(her grandson tells us that she had a beautiful figure, very white skin, dark hair and large 'resigned' eyes)—presented him, in due course, with no less than six illegitimate children—until at last even the Contessa Placidia was moved to protest. He then established his wife in a remote and lonely country-house from which she did not return until very shortly before her death, in time to make a will in his favour. And once again (although again without evidence) the unpleasant words of 'murder' and 'poison' were murmured by the Count's numerous enemies, while a letter written by the Archbishop of Ravenna, Antonio Codronchi, reveals the writer's opinion of the recent widower.

'The Cavaliere Guiccioli, who has come here to prevent the confiscation of all the property he has bought, but not wholly paid for, came to call on me, and spoke, with honey on his lips, of the loss of his wife, which he considers an act of Providence, to enable him to regularize his position. I answered him as he deserved, and told him of the infamy with which he has covered himself in the eyes of all citizens of Ravenna present and future. With one of his usual little laughs he accepted it all, patiently.'[11]

He then married Angelica,—and succeeded in legitimizing some of his children—not without the help (according to a

contemporary) of Cardinal Malvasia himself, who used openly to boast of the fine ring presented to him by Guiccioli as a reward for his intervention.* But in 1817 Angelica died, too —apparently not much regretted by her spouse, since, on the very night of her death, he attended the theatre at Forlì[12]— leaving him with seven children, of whom the eldest, Ferdinando, was only twelve.

And so it was that the Cavaliere again required a bride.

For the first few months, in spite of the forty years that lay between the bride and the bridegroom, the marriage went smoothly enough. We have the letters that Teresa wrote to her husband when, just before and after their marriage, he had to be away for a few days; and even discounting the formal 'eloquence' of a pupil of S Chiara, they are something more than duty letters.[13] 'My adorable husband and friend,' the first one begins, 'it is not two hours since you left, and already I feel the weight of our separation . . . I shall not see you for ten days . . . With these words I went to sleep last night with these I wake up this morning.' And again: 'You are all my soul, you are the greatest good I have on earth and I feel that I could not live without you. My family's love has become nothing for me, since you have become my husband.' She sends him a kiss 'as different from the one I sent my brother as fire is from light'. She implores him to look after himself well, to 'beware of the Rimini *scirocco,* of the heat, of the return journey at night', she reminds him that: 'on your welfare depends that of your Spouse and all her happiness' She shows the greatest anxiety about a letter of hers that has been delayed, 'for fear that you might accuse me of negligence'; she tells him that her time has been spent only 'in keeping company with my old grandmother, and in playing on my instrument', and in the evening, 'a short walk, and conversation with old men and priests'. Finally she is at pains to show him that his bride,

* FARINI, op. cit., p. 72. It should however be said that Farini was a violent anti-clerical, and as such only too glad to spread any little story of this kind.

although young, is not extravagant: 'I have still kept the five scudi untouched, and hope that when you return, you will be satisfied with my economy. I am telling you this, so that you may know how much I care to please you, even in little things.' What could be more edifying and reassuring?

But soon a different note appears. Count Guiccioli's careful 'economy', of which his biographer speaks with so much praise, extended itself, it would seem, to the minutest details of housekeeping; and now, in going over the accounts, he handed over to the servants some matters which Teresa considered to be in her own province. He made her look a fool, she complained with childish petulance, in front of the servants. 'From now onwards, I shall not take the risk of interfering in any domestic matter without a sign from you . . . feeling sure that it is all the same to you whether I am there or not.' The intimate *tu* of the first letters gave place to the formal *voi*; without a doubt the rigidity and monotony of the daily routine, and the duty and self-effacement required of her, had begun to weigh upon her spirits. Moreover, her relations with her large family of step-children (even though they were mostly at school) were not going too well. 'I do not believe much in Ferdinando's welcome,' she wrote of the eldest boy, who was very little younger than herself, 'but will defend myself as best I can.' Finally, in a sentence whose meaning is not quite clear, there is a curious foreshadowing of the future. She was writing to her husband about a letter she had received from the *direttrice* of her old school. 'On one point', she wrote, 'she seems to be of your opinion—that is, as regards Cavalier Serventi.'[14] Was the young wife already demanding one?

Beneath the surface of this marriage—a typical marriage of convenience, it would seem, between April and December—there is an occasional glimpse of something darker, more sinister—an aspect which becomes evident as the story unfolds itself. The bird and the snake—that is the obvious image. Here is a man 'skilled in seduction', as his own grandson described him, a man whose acquisitiveness in later years reached 'the point of mania', so that one of his

peasants said that there was a part of his land which he would never visit, because 'he could not bear to see his boundaries', a man whose rapacity, moreover, sprang 'not so much from love of money as lust of power'. That is his own family's opinion. 'A gloomy, intriguing, proud, generous man', says one report of the Austrian police; 'a sordid, miserly spirit', says another report—not so completely in contradiction with the first as might appear, since the generosity only showed itself in cases where, as in the restoration of the theatre, the benefactor could add thereby to his own prestige and power. A 'man of property', whose need to dominate and love of intrigue extended itself into his family life.

I think it is not too much to maintain that Teresa was tied to her husband by a bond in which there was fascination as well as fear. I think that this rigid, eccentric, ironic old man, with suave formal manners, made use of his experience to gain, by a mixture of sensuality and violence, an evil and strange hold over his young bride. In the 'Vie', in her letters, as in her statement to the members of the 'Sacra Rota' (the Vatican tribunal), we find the same expressions constantly recurring: 'his *strange* habits'—'his eccentricity'. After her return to him in 1826, no longer an inexperienced child, but a woman who had been for four years Byron's mistress, Teresa spoke of the impossibility of being 'as vilely complaisant' as he required; she told of nights when she had to lock herself up into her room and he attempted to batter down the door;[15] she said that the reasons which led her to ask for a second separation were 'of so vile a nature'[16] that she could not speak of them except to her lawyer, or in confession. I cannot see in this only a calculating woman's effort to get back her freedom, with as large an allowance as possible; nor do I believe, had that been the case, that she would have had the support of her step-children,—who themselves were so unhappy in their father's house that, after Teresa's departure, her step-son Ignazio helped his sisters to run away.[17]

And yet when, several years later, Teresa looked back, her remarks about her husband have, in spite of everything, a

curiously exculpatory accent. 'A man who cannot be judged like another', she called him, 'an eccentric', 'a man of great intelligence'[18]—and finally, after his death, she wrote: 'I have always attributed his behaviour towards me to natural and invincible eccentricity, rather than to perfidiousness.'[19] Only two months after her first separation from him, and at the height of her affair with Byron, Teresa was sending her husband a letter of condolence on the death of his eldest son, writing: 'Indirectly, may I not still do you some good?' And when, after their second separation, his eyesight gave him trouble, she consulted famous oculists for him in Paris and London. Perhaps the best comment is the one that Teresa herself wrote to Byron, on the subject of his relations with *his* wife: 'The human heart is very complicated—and I fear I shall never be able to understand it.'

The year 1818, which introduced Teresa to matrimony, was Byron's second year in Venice. Too much has been said elsewhere of his Venetian period to go over the ground again here. His own letters, and the accounts of his friends, have described the state of bitterness and despair in which he arrived there, and the immediate spell which the city—'the greenest island of my imagination'—cast over him. They have described the great, bare rooms of the Palazzo Mocenigo, and the long procession of beautiful mistresses, queer animals and curious British visitors that passed through them; they have portrayed Marianna Segati and 'Mme la Boulangère', and all the lesser figures of his Venetian masquerade. Every episode, too, has been told and retold: the midnight swims in the Grand Canal, the rides on the Lido, the studious hours in the library of the Armenian monastery. It has all been noted with the pomposity of Hobhouse—the censoriousness of the Hoppners—the hero-worship of Shelley—the geniality of Moore. But it has all been seen only through *English* eyes. It may be amusing, for a change,—since every life has as many facets as it has observers—to watch Mylord for a moment through another peep-hole, that of his Italian acquaintances.

Byron was no longer a novelty in Venetian society by the end of 1818; but, in the journalistic sense, he was always 'news'. Wherever he went there was a rustle of chatter. Always there was a fresh story to tell about *l'Anglico Mylord* —so rich, so beautiful, so dissipated, so generous, so irascible. To a lady who dared to criticize one of his verses, he said he wished he could drown her in the sea—and as to his horsemanship, that was an even more tender subject. One day at Florian's Café a young man permitted himself to show some amusement in describing Byron's style of riding, and at once Byron slapped his face.[20] Another sure way of arousing one of his sudden fits of rage was to attempt any translation of his work; a poor young Venetian began to translate 'Manfred',—and promptly Byron offered him whatever price he could obtain for what he had done, provided he would throw it into the fire. Some bargaining ensued, brought to an end by Byron's threat that, if the translator would not accept the sum he offered, he would exchange it for a horsewhip.* 'Lord Byron', Teresa wrote in the 'Vie',[c] always dissuaded people from translating his poems. He said that it was quite enough to see his elucubrations dressed up in English garb but that to see them also in fancy-dress, was extremely disagreeable to him.'[21]

But Byron could be as generous as he was high-handed. A young girl with a bundle of manuscripts which had been refused by every Venetian publisher, somehow managed to get into the Palazzo Mocenigo and began to tell him her story. While she was talking, Byron was scribbling something; then he changed the subject, and she thought her appeal had failed; but as she rose to say goodbye, he put a piece of paper in her hand: it was a cheque for several pounds. The house and press of a Venetian printer having

* To Hoppner, Byron wrote about this translation: 'As I did not write *to* the Italians, nor *for* the Italians, nor *of* the Italians . . . I confess I wish that they would let me alone . . . Our modes of thinking and writing are so unutterably different, that I can conceive no greater absurdity than attempting to make any approach between the English and Italian poetry of the present day.' *L.J.*, IV, p. 205.

been destroyed by fire, Byron headed the poor man's subscription list with £150. A singer, the Cortesi, had a benefit night; the most generous gift she received was Byron's purse, containing 50 golden napoleons. No wonder the Venetians chattered! 'It is said that he has an income of 120,000 pounds sterling. And moreover his poems are paid by his editor at a pound a verse, a sum which he uses to help a noble friend who has lost his fortune.'[22]

It is said, it is said . . . what was not said? The eyes and ears of the Venetians were not less sharp, and their curiosity hardly less keen, than that of his fellow-countrymen at Geneva who had kept watch upon his garden with a telescope. In Venice, as elsewhere, he was a menagerie animal, a rhinoceros at the ball. After nights spent in unbelievable debaucheries, they whispered, he would leap from his bed, seize the sword which he always kept by his side, and, clad only in his night-shirt, would fence with the window-curtains! He breakfasted on a dish of rice, with a glass of water and vinegar, he supped on a snipe, with a glass of tea, two raw eggs and a biscuit. He was growing whiskers because someone had told him that without them he looked like a musician. When he went for his daily ride, a small crowd was always waiting on the quay, beside the Jewish Cemetery, watching for his return. He could not bear to see a woman eating (this was true). He had never seen the Piazza San Marco (so as not to be watched limping across it) except from the windows of the Casa Cicognara or Casa Michiel. So the chatter went on. A great deal of it is to be found in the *Cronaca* of Count Francesco Rangone, a literary nobleman and an industrious gossip of Ferrara,—whose acquaintance Byron was to make a little later on in Bologna, but who, even before they had met, amused himself with collecting as many stories about him as he could, and setting them down under the title: *'Peep at a very cultivated and rich, but strange Mylord.'*

'He was able to attract the interest of an illustrious young lady, both cultivated and rich, who, having refused every proposal, desired to be united to a man of superior distinc-

tion. This she recognized in Lord Byron. Little time was needed to arrange the marriage, but the strange Lord, having achieved the first night, abandoned next day the unhappy Milady, who, being enceinte, gave birth to a little girl, who she constantly fears may be sent for by her singular husband. Mylord Byron then—disgusted with his own government for political reasons—left for Italy, printing his farewell to his wife beforehand and taking with him a Little Girl, issue of genial relations with a distinguished Damsel, whom he abandoned with the same indifference as his wife. The respectable Lord then established himself in Venice, bringing with him 24 servants, some dogs, parrots, monkeys and horses.'

As to the respectable Lord's character:

'He seems indisposed towards his own government and the Austrian. He speaks freely, however, about everyone, and dedicates his life only to study and to the pleasures of Love. Also, even as he gives free rein to his thoughts, so also does he show no restraint in satisfying his desires, and even less in telling everyone about his amorous adventures . . . Dear to the Learned, he is not less so to the Fair—alike for his riches, for an appearance not to be despised, for his charming manners and the singularity of his character.'[23]

But Rangone's information, as yet, was only second-hand, probably gathered chiefly from his brother, who was Contessa Benzoni's Cavalier Servente, and had met Byron in her salon. A more entertaining account is that left us by assuredly the most assiduous—if not, as he would have liked to think, the most intimate—of Byron's Venetian friends, Cavaliere Angelo Mengaldo. This Venetian Boswell was a stout, solemn little man, who had distinguished himself in the Napoleonic wars, taking part with great valour in the Russian campaign and saving the life of a fellow officer who was drowning in the Beresina—a Liberal, a Romantic, a snob, a writer of occasional verses—and, it is obvious from his diary, a quite insufferable bore. His first meeting with Byron took place in March 1818, at the house of the British Consul, Richard Hoppner, 'un Anglais pas incommode'—by which Mengaldo meant, he explains, an Englishman who, although he showed

a polite contempt for all that was not English, was yet 'fairly civil' to him.[24]

But the meeting with Byron was a disappointment. 'I could have wished him a little more courteous—that is to say, that he had spoken a little more Italian.' Byron, by then, knew Italian well—but he would not take the trouble to speak it in another Englishman's house. The acquaintance, however, continued; the next entry in Mengaldo's diary describes Byron as an 'être étonnant', and soon the Cavaliere decided that nobody was so suited as he, by both circumstances and temperament, to become Byron's closest friend in Venice. Were they not both Liberals, both Romantics, both regarded with suspicion by the Austrian police? Had they not both been unhappy in their family life? Had they not both meditated—or at least talked of—suicide? So Mengaldo industriously continued to frequent every conversazione where he might hope to see the English poet, and soon met him again at Contessa Benzoni's. The conversation turned to swimming: Byron did not fail to describe his swims across the Hellespont and the Tigris; nor did Mengaldo keep silence about *his* swimming, under fire, across the Danube and the Beresina. For the first time, Byron showed some interest in his companion—but now there was a contretemps. Among the guests at Contessa Benzoni's there were three other English people: a Colonel Montgomery ('of serious and rather ferocious appearance, affable but reserved') and his wife and sister. After supper, when Mengaldo was sitting beside Miss Montgomery, whom he afterwards discovered to have been a friend of Lady Byron's, he saw the poet crossing the room, and said to his neighbour, 'He is coming to speak to you.' 'He will not dare to,' replied the young woman—and as Byron stopped to speak to her, she got up and cut him dead.*

* This was the same Colonel Montgomery who inopportunely turned up in Genoa when Byron was there. 'His pale face,' says Lady Blessington, 'flushed crimson when one of our party inadvertently mentioned that Colonel M. was at Genoa. He tried in various ways to discover whether Colonel M. had spoken ill of him to us, and displayed an ingenuity in putting his questions,

Mengaldo spread the story all over Venice—it even reached Stendhal's ears, and he wrote to a friend to say that Colonel Montgomery had challenged Byron to a duel. 'La phrase de Byron avait été insignificante, courte et archidécente; mais le souffle de ce monstre souille une beauté pâle et froide.'[25]

Then there was Byron's and Mengaldo's famous swimming-match. The version given by the two chief protagonists (Alexander Scott, who was also with them, seems to have held his tongue) vary as much as one would expect. According to Mengaldo, they all started from the Lido, with two gondolas following them, and all three of them, having reached the Grand Canal together, started swimming down it; Mengaldo got out of the water at the Rialto, Scott at S. Felice and Byron only at S. Andrea (nearly at the end of the Grand Canal.)

But Byron in a subsequent letter to Murray says that: 'At the entrance of the Grand Canal, Scott and I were a good way ahead, and we saw no more of our foreign friend, which, however, was of no consequence, as there was a Gondola to hold his cloathes and pick him up.'[26]

He must have told the same tale in Venice at the time, for Mengaldo notes in his diary that everyone is talking of the match—'mais,' he adds sadly, 'pas tant en ma faveur. Lord Byron n'est plus si courtois qu'il était autre-fois.' Nevertheless, as a souvenir of the swimming-match, Byron presented Mengaldo with a copy of his 'Giaour'. 'Ma fantaisie', notes the recipient, 'est fort agitée par cette lecture. Je crains que l'anglomanie ne me soit entrée dans le corps.' And then comes a pathetic postscript: 'Tout homme de génie m'enflamme et me transporte. Pourquoi ne le suis-je pas?'

By the following January he is hopefully writing: 'Il me témoigne plus de familiarité que je n'aurais pu m'attendre.' The next week Byron entertains him with 'le récit très intér-

that would have been amusing had it not betrayed the morbid sensibility of his mind.' LADY BLESSINGTON. *The Idler in Italy*, I, p. 330.

essant de son mariage et de son amour . . . Sa vie est aussi romanesque que le genre de ses poésies.' In February: 'Chez Lord Byron; confidences mutuelles.' During the Carnival balls they met almost every night—and now Mengaldo, convinced that he had a right to the position of Byron's closest friend, began to be jealous of Alexander Scott. 'A la redoute avec Lord Byron, mais sa première confidence me fut ravie par Scott. Il en a le droit par son ancienneté [*sic*] par sa qualité d'Anglais, et j'ose même dire par son immoralité.'

For Mengaldo, like so many of Byron's friends, was at heart a Puritan. He, too, was passing from one light love-affair to another; but he was doing so like a good Catholic, with a proper sense of sin, and like a good citizen, with order and method. Byron treated his love affairs with the same casualness as everything else; this was truly shocking. On one occasion, on their way back from riding on the Lido, Mengaldo accompanied him to his *Casino*.[27] This was the pleasure-house where Byron entertained his 'Chorus of the Nine Muses'—the Venetian women whom the Fornarina's jealousy would not allow to enter the Palazzo Mocenigo—and it was here that only a few months later he must have taken Teresa. We do not know what Mengaldo saw there, but we do know that he was deeply shocked: 'Je fus effrayé de son horrible système.' A few weeks later Byron allowed himself 'mille plaisanteries' with la Pallerini, a *première danseuse* with whom Mengaldo himself was in love. ('Elle vous arrache les larmes, les cris de joie, de désespoir, d'étonnement, de frayeur.') And then Madame Hoppner, that snake in the grass, had a conversation with him: 'Découvertes sur le caractère de Lord Byron, très défavorables à lui' It was Byron's peculiar lot to cause practically all his friends to turn into preachers or governesses. Madame de Staël lectured him about his private life at Coppet; Mr. Hobhouse in Albania; Mr. Hoppner on the Lido; Lady Blessington in Genoa. And now even the Cavaliere Mengaldo took it upon himself to improve him. Walking up and down the Riva degli Schiavoni, he told the noble Lord that he would be able to do much more for Italy if he first reformed his own morals. But it

was not a success: 'L'amitié de Lord Byron pour moi s'allentit: mes sermons n'étaient pas de son goût.'

The friendship—if such a one-sided relationship can be so called—was over. But there was a curious sequel. When at the beginning of June Byron was leaving Venice, to follow Teresa to Ravenna, Mengaldo came to call upon him in the early morning, to say goodbye. 'These hours were solemn ones for the friendship of the great poet of freedom and the soldier of Bonaparte.' Mengaldo gave Byron a letter of introduction to friends in Ferrara, about which Byron—having made full use of it—subsequently wrote disagreeably to Hoppner: 'Mengaldo gave me a letter for which I am grateful, which is a troublesome sensation.'[28] But at the time, he did something very odd—and most characteristic. He drew out of his pocketbook a French cross of the Légion d'Honneur, and pinned it on to his friend's chest, saying: 'It could not be in a better place' Then he left Venice—having made at least one man happy.[29]

And then there was an equally characteristic, if regrettable, epilogue Mengaldo, left behind in Venice, continued to deplore Lord Byron's dissolute habits, he gossiped with Contessa Benzoni; he repeated her remarks to Mrs. Hoppner. And Hoppner took up his pen and wrote a long letter to Byron attacking Contessa Guiccioli—and Byron supposed, rightly or wrongly, that Mengaldo had had a finger in the pie.

'In future I shall be less kind to them,' [Hoppner and Mengaldo] he wrote angrily to Scott 'and you may tell Mengaldo so—a little tittle-tattling boasting parvenu—who never could forgive one's beating him in his little narrow field—as we did hollow.'[30]

If I have dwelt so long upon these very minor episodes of Byron's life in Venice, it is because they seem to me to throw some light upon the next phase of his life. They reveal to us how completely he had remained, in Venice, a foreigner. In the midst of all those inquisitive eyes, those outstretched hands, those uncompanionable companions, he was still alone.

Towards the end of his time there, he was himself acutely aware of this, and showed it in an almost complete withdrawal from 'good' Venetian society. In the first year, he had assiduously frequented, for instance, the salon of Contessa Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi, who fancied herself as the Madame de Staël of Venice, and he had tried to make friends with the Italian men of letters whom he met at her house. But it was no good. Contessa Albrizzi herself was intelligent, but pretentious—the one fault Byron would never put up with—and her celebrities, in his eyes, were even worse: 'Your literary everyday man and I never went well in company—especially your foreigner, whom I never could abide. Except Giordani—and—and—and—(I really can't name any other) I do not remember a man amongst them whom I ever wished to see twice.' [81] Giordani was the one exception, and we know that he warmly responded to Byron's immediate liking for him. Byron had at first refused to be introduced to him, he told a friend in a letter, and then had only given way on condition that their conversation should not be 'about his works, about poetry, or worst of all about the Romantics, whom he abominates! I kept the pact and our conversations were then so long and so intimate that the numerous assembly was surprised and amused.' They spoke about Byron's travels, about Italy, about politics.

'He hates and despises the French, who in 25 years have changed their government and opinions 19 times; he hates the English government, which tyrannizes over its own nation and the world; but he does not despair of the human species . . . I found nothing in him of the arrogance of a man who had become so famous so young; nothing of English pride; nothing of the contempt which he shows all the time to some people.' He showed Giordani the Segati's portrait; he spoke of his wife. 'He exhorted me to settle in Venice, so that we could see each other often.' [82]

It sounds a most successful and agreeable evening. But Giordani did not stay in Venice; they never corresponded, and that acquaintance, too, faded away. And the Conversazioni at the Albrizzi's became more and more wearisome, more

and more self-consciously pedantic. Byron could not stand for ever looking at Canova's bust of Helen, even though he thought it the most beautiful in the world.[33] One evening he gave his arm to a young bride, who had just arrived and wished to see the famous bust. But she must have held her head so low, in shyness or fatigue, after three days of marriage and two of travelling, that he did not even notice her face, and Teresa also—for it was Teresa, on her wedding journey—declared the next day that she had not seen her companion.[34] No foreshadowing of the future, no breath of a wing, touched them that night.

And very soon after this evening, Byron quarrelled finally with the Albrizzi—who insisted on including him in her absurd gallery of literary portraits. He had seen enough, he decided, of Venetian society—and he knew only too well what his Venetian popularity was worth. 'As to the "adoration" of the Venetians,' he wrote later on to Scott, 'you are, of course, laughing. I have never counted [on] their liking—but have done them no harm—at least not intentionally.'[35] Of Venice he was not yet tired—'all its disadvantages are more than compensated by the sight of a single gondola'[36] —but, after his early efforts to live like the Italians, he had gone back to his solitude. He rode with Hoppner and Scott at the Lido; he talked with his Armenian monks; he made love when he must. But of any equal companionship he was as deprived as if he had been living in the Sahara. He was ready, more than ready, for some deeper tie, some permanent human attachment.

The only Conversazioni to which he occasionally still went were those of Contessa Marina Querini Benzoni—but they were a very different matter from Contessa Albrizzi's. When Byron met Marina she was approaching sixty, but her gaiety, vitality and ardour endowed her favours—which it was said she did not deny to Mylord—with a perennial freshness. At the time of the French domination, she had danced with Ugo Foscolo in the Piazza San Marco round the Tree of Liberty, dressed only in an Athenian tunic, which revealed her fine legs and thighs. But, according to Teresa, 'she was

so kind, so charming and so tolerant, that no one asked her to account for what the morals of Venice had permitted to her in her youth'. After a liaison which had lasted for thirty years her Cavalier Servente, Count Giuseppe Rangone, 'still considered her as a divinity', and when, one morning, Byron inquired of him how the Contessa was today, he replied with the single word '*Rugiadosa*'.* Her *embonpoint,* however, was considerable—no doubt partly in consequence of her immoderate taste for *polenta,* which caused her, even when she went out in the 'gloomy gaiety' of her gondola, to conceal a smoking hot slice of that delicacy, which she nibbled at intervals, in her abundant bosom—a habit which earned for her the nickname of '*el fumeto*'. '*Xe quà el fumeto!*' the gondoliers would cry, as they saw her pass.† At the age of sixty she suddenly decided to marry Rangone, who was then seventy—and they enjoyed eleven more years of happiness together. Outspoken and vivacious, making no secret of her love of pleasure, gay and kind, her memory echoes to this day on the Venetian canals, in the love-song which she inspired, 'La biondina in gondoleta'. And it was at a Conversazione at her house, under her sharp and observant eye, that Byron—for one really cannot count those five minutes at the Albrizzi's—met, and fell in love with, Teresa Guiccioli Gamba.

* 'Dewy'. 'Vie', pp. 36, 37.

† 'Here comes the little smoke!' MALAMANI, *Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi, i suoi amici, il suo tempo.*

I: VENICE

A stranger loves the Lady of the land

Teresa Guiccioli was very reluctant, on that April evening, to go to Casa Benzoni. She had only arrived in Venice two days before, she was tired by the journey—and she was, moreover, in deep mourning for both her mother and her sister. Her husband, as usual, had insisted on going to the theatre—'it was for him a necessity'—but to go on to Contessa Benzoni's Conversazione seemed to her superfluous. She argued with her husband in the gondola, and finally, she tells us, gave way 'merely out of obedience', with tears in her eyes, 'making him promise that they would not stay more than a few minutes. Hardly, however, had she entered, than she saw—sitting on the sofa opposite the door, beside another young man,—a figure that seemed to her 'a celestial apparition'. 'This meeting sealed the destiny of their hearts.'*

The effect on Byron, however, seems to have been somewhat less immediate. When Contessa Benzoni wished to introduce him, he refused saying: 'You know that I do not wish to meet any more ladies: if they are ugly because they are ugly; and if they are pretty because they are pretty.' It was only after a good deal of persuasion from his hostess and from Mr. Scott†—who said that surely he might make one exception, in a salon where beauty was far from common—that he gave way and allowed himself to be taken across the room and be introduced as 'Pair d'Angleterre et son plus

* The account of this meeting is taken from Teresa's 'Vie de Lord Byron', pp. 41-51, which gives many more details than she supplied to Moore. The whole of the 'Vie' is written in the third person, and Teresa generally refers to herself as 'Madame la Comtesse' or even as 'la jeune dame'. She does not state the exact day of the meeting; it appears to have been on April 2nd or 3rd, 1819.

† Alexander Scott.

grand poète'. 'This introduction,' says Teresa, 'placed on Byron's lips one of those charming smiles which Coleridge so much admired and called the Gate of Heaven.' He sat down beside her and they began to talk—about Venice and Ravenna, and also, says Teresa proudly, 'with enthusiasm and assurance' about Dante and Petrarch. 'But already the subject of their conversation had become an accessory,' and when Guiccioli at last came across the room to tell Teresa that the 'few minutes' of their visit had long since elapsed, 'she rose to leave as if in a dream—and on crossing the threshold of the palace she realized that she no longer felt as tranquil as she had on entering. These mysterious attractions are too shaking to the soul and make one afraid!'[1]

At this point Teresa's official narrative becomes somewhat vague. She speaks of meetings every evening at the theatre and afterwards at supper, of conversations always more intimate and more inexhaustible—of long gondola rides across the Lagoon—of sunsets at the Lido. 'This existence,' says Teresa, 'seemed to them entirely natural and was already becoming necessary!' But all the details are shrouded in a golden haze of romantic sentiment. Fortunately, however, we possess another document which is considerably more informative. It is Teresa's 'Confession' to her husband *

'I then felt attracted to him', she says, after describing their first meeting, 'by an irresistible force. He became aware of it, and asked to see me alone the next day. I was so imprudent as to agree, on condition that he would respect my honour: he promised and we settled on the hour after dinner, in which you [Count Guiccioli] took your rest. At that time

* This very curious document, which exists only in the Elliot Papers, purports to be a letter from Teresa to her husband, telling the whole story of her relationship with Byron. Its peculiar mixture of truth and lies and its remarkable skill in skating over thin ice, are characteristic, but it is difficult to account for its having been written at all, except on the supposition that Guiccioli extracted it from her, to disprove what was being said of him by the Gamba family. It is unfinished, and was apparently never made use of. It is not quoted in *I Guiccioli*, nor in any documents in the Vatican Archives.

an old boatman appeared with a note, in an unknown gondola, and took me to Mylord's gondola, where he was waiting, and together we went to a *casino* of his. I was strong enough to resist at that first encounter, but was so imprudent as to repeat it the next day, when my strength gave way—for B. was not a man to confine himself to sentiment. And, the first step taken, there was no further obstacle in the following days.'[2]

The long absences in her gondola, Teresa explained, were rendered possible by the presence of 'a companion with whom she always went out, who had been a governess in the house and with whom she practised the French language'. This is the first appearance of another important character in the story: Fanny Silvestrini, the *confidante*. Though she may well have been a governess in Casa Guiccioli in her youth, this does not appear to have been her only profession, and at this time, most conveniently, she was the mistress of Lega Zambelli, who was Count Guiccioli's steward and who subsequently passed into Byron's service.

It is her pen which relates some of the next stages of the story—and it was she who not only, with a gusto worthy of Juliet's nurse, concealed and protected those first secret meetings, but subsequently transmitted Teresa's letters to Byron. Her fluent, persuasive, interminable letters exhale an aroma of Goldonian comedy, a heavy breath of patchouli; almost we can hear the insinuating tones of her voice, in the soft Venetian dialect so suited to the language of love; we can see the abundant curves of her figure, reclining in Teresa's gondola, as she patiently waits for the two lovers who have disappeared into the little house at S. Maria Zobenigo—and the hours pass, and the sun goes down, and a little cold wind springs up over the lagoon.

During this time, according to Teresa, Byron showed occasional moods of 'melancholy and preoccupation', which she liked to attribute to his sense of duty and 'his knowledge of the human heart'. But she frankly admits that she herself was quite simply and wholeheartedly happy. 'She had known too little of life to reflect—and she gave up her soul entirely

where her heart led. This Venice, without flowers, without trees, without scents, without birds, which had pleased her so little before, with its lugubrious gondolas instead of her team of horses, now seemed to her the abode of the very light of life, an earthly paradise.'[3]

It would appear, however, that even Byron—accustomed as he was to easy conquests—was slightly taken aback by the extreme facility and publicity of this one.

'She is pretty,' he wrote to Hobhouse on April 6th, 'but has no tact; answers aloud when she should whisper; talks of age to old ladies who want to pass for young; and this blessed night horrified a correct company at the Benzona's by calling out to me '*mio Byron*', in an audible key, during a dead silence of pause in the other prattlers, who stared and whispered their respective *serventi*!'[4]

All the fans fluttered, and Teresa was delighted. She was too proud of the conquest of the most celebrated figure in Venice, to wish to keep it to herself.

Rangone, naturally, does not fail to mention such a delightful new titbit.

'The arrival of the noble Young Lady gave a new direction to Mylord's gallantries. The fair nymph was flattered by his attentions and, renouncing any attempt at decorum, made herself an object of general conversation by her unreserved behaviour. Mylord himself warned her, but Mylord himself also told everyone of her gracious favours.'[5]

Byron's private meetings, however, with Teresa, were very few in number. 'We had but ten days', he wrote to Kinnaird, 'to manage all our little matters in',[6] and added in a later letter that 'the *essential* part of the business' had only lasted 'four continuous days'.[7] 'Earthly Paradises', wrote Teresa sadly, 'cannot be expected to endure.' She was suddenly informed by her husband that they would be leaving two days later for their country estate on the Po, and was so much dismayed that she at once hurried off, in the company of an old family friend, to the theatre, in the hope of meeting Byron and telling him the sad news herself. She did indeed at once meet him in the lobby and 'almost involun-

tarily followed him into his box and told him of her troubles '. 'This box', she adds, 'was generally used by men only, and was always the target of Venetian curiosity; one can imagine that this was increased a hundredfold by the young lady's presence!' The opera was Rossini's *Othello,* and 'in the midst of this atmosphere of melody and harmonious passion . . . they realized what they were going to lose'.[8] When, however, the Count rejoined his wife at the theatre, he showed no traces of jealousy, but invited Lord Byron to visit them in Ravenna—and when, on the following evening, the moment for departure arrived, it was on Byron's arm that Teresa descended into her gondola—while once again he promised to rejoin her as soon as possible.

'This promise', says Teresa, 'seemed doubly solemn in the silence of the night and the starlight, and gave to both their hearts the courage that was so badly needed.'[9] Her gondola - (for apparently they were making the journey by night)—stole across the lagoon in the starlight, with no sound but the faint lapping of the gondolier's oars; 'her heart stayed behind in Venice'.

The estate to which Count Guiccioli was taking his wife, on their way back to Ravenna, Cà Zen, had recently been bought by him from the Zeno family and lay at the mouth of the Po, in a desolate marsh. The great plain—frequently flooded when the rivers broke their banks—was unshaded by a single bush or tree; only a vast expanse of rough, tangled grass and wild marshland stretched from the river to the lagoon. The only sound was that of the wind and the wailing of sea-birds; the only sight, an occasional fisherman's boat, moored beside its nets in the river. In this melancholy setting—'with no one to speak to, without music, almost without books, waiting for the Count to come back from his business expeditions'—Teresa now spent her days, remembering the delights of Venice and writing long, unhappy letters to her lover. These, she tells us, she took to the post at the neighbouring village of Loreo—sending them, as we shall see, under cover to the obliging Fanny Silvestrini.

We do not possess these letters. The first was forwarded to

Byron on April 13th by Fanny Silvestrini, with a note in which she said that she would bring any subsequent letter to him in person; the second was sent under cover of the following letter from Fanny.

FANNY SILVESTRINI TO BYRON[10]

[*April 19th*, 1819]

My Lord: The most afflicted Teresina, on leaving here, begged only one thing of me—that I should try to see Mylord, and speak to him of her, always of her—in order to bring her back more vividly to his memory. This, Mylord, is why I sought the honour of seeing you, and am seeking it again today, if I may do so without being impertinent.

Permit me also to remind you that the aforesaid Teresina is counting on a letter from you on Thursday, when she will arrive in Ravenna, and that the post leaves tomorrow at midday. I hope you will not render her expectations vain.

I enclose a second note. Awaiting your commands, pray honour me with your kindness and accept my humble duty.

FANNY

To Teresa, Fanny described at some length how faithfully she was carrying out her role as go-between.

FANNY SILVESTRINI TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

Venice *April 19th*, [1819]

My dear Friend: Without any preamble let me tell you that on the morning of the 13th M[ylord] had your note on awakening, that every day I went to the post office to fetch any others, and that only yesterday evening your other letter reached me, which now, while I am writing, should be reaching its destination. If by a man's words one may judge his heart, if it adds to your happiness to be certain of the love, the tenderness of M[ylord], I will tell you that he loves you with the greatest *enthusiasm and ardour, of which the most susceptible heart is capable.* He has sworn and declared to me, in the short time that we have seen each other, that this

is not a mere flash nor a whim, but a true sentiment—and that you have made on him an impression that can *never* be erased. He vows he is completely estranged from anything that could distract him, and he is impatiently awaiting your letter, which no doubt will cheer him at his awakening. I exhort you, I advise you, I beg you, dear Friend, to be circumspect and prudent, lest the intensity of your love betray you, and to remember that sometimes a first strong inclination may be decisive for a whole life-time. I will not write about the chatter of the idle gossips (for the affair of the Box gave them full scope). Today they have ceased talking about it—and the unconventional—male and female—are all on your side.

Today I will go out about your errands, but I fear I shall not succeed in doing anything at such prices, the gilt bronze beads especially– for they are asking not five but eight Lira a string, as you should well remember, since you were present. As to the feathers, it shall be done, and when I have fresh instructions and M[ylord] goes to Ravenna I shall be able to send you everything. I embrace you with all my heart and am, believe me, always at your service. FANNY

And now, at last, we have Byron's first letter to Teresa. The original is enclosed, together with his next three letters, in a folder, inscribed in Teresa's hand '4 letters from Lord Byron. First series. From our first acquaintance to his arrival in Ravenna.' On another small sheet of paper is written: 'The address I gave him to write to me in Ravenna:

Al Signor Don Gaspare Perelli
Ravenna.'

This obliging priest was living in Ravenna, and continued to be of considerable assistance to the two lovers, after Byron's arrival. 'By the aid of a Priest,' Byron was writing to Hoppner in June, 'a Chambermaid, a young Negro-boy, and a female friend, we are enabled to carry on our unlawful loves.'[11] Later on in the year, when Byron had gone to Bologna, we find Don Gaspare writing to him—in a half-educated style and hand—to tell him how much he would

have liked to go to the great annual fair at Lugo. 'But the lack of money is keeping me in town. If you had been in Ravenna, who knows but that I might not have had some help to go to the Fair!'[12]

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

Venice *April 22nd*, 1819

My dearest Love: Your dearest letter came today and gave me my first moment of happiness since your departure. My feelings correspond only too closely to the sentiments expressed in your letter, but it will be very difficult for me to reply in your beautiful language to your sweet expressions, which deserve an answer in deeds, rather than words. I flatter myself, however, that your heart will be able to suggest to you *what* and *how much* mine would like to say to you. Perhaps if I loved you less it would not cost me so much to express my thoughts, but now I have to overcome the double difficulty of expressing an unbearable suffering in a language foreign to me. Forgive my mistakes, the more barbarous my style, the more will it resemble my Fate away from you. You, who are my only and last love, who are my only joy, the delight of my life—you who are my only hope—you who were—at least for a moment—all mine—you have gone away—and I remain here alone and desolate. There, in a few words, is our story! It is a common experience, which we must bear like so many others, for love is never happy, but we two must suffer more, because your circumstances and mine are equally extraordinary. But I don't want to think of all this, let us love

. . . let us love now
When love to love can give an answering vow.[13]

When *Love* is not *Sovereign* in a heart, when everything does not give way to him, when all is not sacrificed to him, then it is Friendship—esteem—what you will—but no longer *Love.*

You vowed to be true to me and I will make no vows to you; let us see which of us will be the more faithful. Remember that, when the time comes that you no longer feel

anything for me, you will not have to put up with my reproaches; I shall suffer, it is true, but in silence. I know only too well what a man's heart is like, and also, a little, perhaps, a woman's; I know that Sentiment is not in our control, but is what is most beautiful and fragile in our existence. So, when you feel for another what you have felt for me, tell me so sincerely—I shall cease to annoy you—I shall not see you again—I shall envy the happiness of my rival, but shall trouble you no more. This however I promise you: You sometimes tell me that I have been your *first* real love—and I assure you that you shall be my last Passion. I may well hope not to fall in love again, now that everything has become indifferent to me. Before I knew you—I felt an interest in many women, but never in one only. Now I love *you*, there is no other woman in the world for me.

You talk of tears and of our unhappiness; my sorrow is within; I do not weep. You have fastened on your arm a likeness that does not deserve so highly; but yours is in my heart, it has become part of my life, of my soul; and were there another life after this one, there too you would be mine —without you where would Paradise be? Rather than Heaven without you, I should prefer the Inferno of that Great Man buried in your city, so long as you were with me, as Francesca was with her lover.

My sweetest treasure—I am trembling as I write to you, as I trembled when I saw you—but no longer—with such sweet heartbeats. I have a thousand things to say to you, and know not how to say them, a thousand kisses to send you—and, alas, how many Sighs! Love me—not as I love you—for that would make you too unhappy, love me not as I deserve, for that would be too little—but as your Heart commands. Do not doubt me—I am and always shall be your most tender lover.

BYRON

Venice *April 22nd*, 1819

P.S. How much happier than I is this letter: which in a few days will be in your hands—and perhaps may even be brought to your lips. With such a hope I am kissing it before it goes. Goodbye—my soul.

April 23rd, 4 o'clock

At this moment two other letters of yours have come! The irregularity of the post has been a great trouble to us both—but pray—my Love, do not lose faith in me. When you do not get news from me—believe that I am dead, rather than unfaithful or ungrateful. I will answer your dearest letters soon. Now the post is going—I kiss you ten thousand times.[14]

On the superscription is added, in Byron's hand:

'Written April 22nd, 1819.
April 28th, 1820. I have re-read it in Ravenna, after a year of most singular events.'

Venice *April 25th,* 1819

My Love: I hope you have received my letter of the 22nd, addressed to the person in Ravenna of whom you told me, before leaving Venice.— You scold me for not having written to you in the country—but—how could I? My sweetest treasure, you gave me no other address but that of Ravenna. If you knew how great is the love I feel for you, you would not believe me capable of forgetting you for a single instant. You must become better acquainted with me—perhaps one day you will know that although I do not deserve you—I do indeed love you.

You want to know whom I most enjoy seeing, since you have gone away, who makes me tremble and feel—not what you alone can arouse in my soul—but something like it? Well, I will tell you—it is the *old porter* whom Fanny used to send with your notes when you were in Venice—and who now brings your letters—still dear, but not so dear as those which brought the hope of seeing you that same day at the usual time. My Teresa, where are you? Everything here reminds me of you—everything is the same, but you are not here, and I still am. In separation the one who goes away suffers less than the one who says behind. The distraction of the journey, the change of scene, the landscape, the movement, perhaps even the separation, distract the mind and lighten the heart. But the one who stays behind is sur-

rounded by the same things; tomorrow is like yesterday—while only She is lacking who made him forget that a tomorrow would ever come. When I go to the Conversazione, I give myself up to Tedium, too happy to suffer ennui rather than grief. I see the same faces—hear the same voices—but no longer dare to look towards the sofa where I shall not see *you* any more—but instead some old crone who might be Calumny personified. I hear, without the slightest emotion, the opening of that door which I used to watch with so much anxiety when I was there before you, hoping to see you come in. I will not speak of *much dearer* places still, for *there* I shall not go—*until* you return. I have no other pleasure than thinking of you, but I do not see how I could see again the places where we have been together—especially those most consecrated to our love—without dying of grief.

Fanny is now in Treviso—and God knows when I shall have any more letters from you—but meanwhile I have received three, you must by now have arrived in Ravenna—I long to hear of your arrival; my fate depends upon your decision. Fanny will be back in a few days—but tomorrow I shall send her a note by a friend's hand to ask her not to forget to send me your news, if she receives any letters before returning to Venice.

My Treasure—my life has become most monotonous and sad; neither books, nor music, nor *Horses* (rare things in Venice—but you know that mine are at the Lido)—nor dogs—give me any pleasure; the society of women does not attract me; I won't speak of the society of men, for that I have always despised. For some years I have been trying systematically to avoid strong passions, having suffered too much from the tyranny of Love. *Never to feel admiration*[15]—and to take pleasure without giving too much importance to the pleasure in itself—to feel indifference towards human affairs—contempt for many, but hatred for none,—this was the basis of my philosophy. I did not mean to love any more, nor did I hope to receive Love. You have put to flight all my resolutions—now I am all yours—I will become what you wish—perhaps happy in your love, but never at peace again.

You should not have reawakened my heart—for (at least in my own country) my love has been fatal to those I love—and to myself. But these reflections come too late. You have been mine—and, whatever the outcome, I am, and eternally shall be, entirely yours. I kiss you a thousand and a thousand times—but

What does it profit you, my heart, to be beloved?
What good to me to have so dear a lover?
Why should a cruel fate
Separate those whom love has once united?*

Love me—as always your tender and faithful B.

Teresa meanwhile—after a short stay in another of her husband's new estates near Pomposa—had arrived in Ravenna. But she says that the violent emotions of the last few weeks, her depression since her separation from Byron, and the discomfort of the journey, had so much affected her health that she fainted several times on the way, and on getting home immediately took to her bed. She then—to the alarm of her friends and relations—gave herself up to a mysterious illness, whose symptoms she poetically described as consisting chiefly of a consumptive cough (this was a hereditary ailment in her family) and of frequent swoons, 'in which her spirit skimmed over the Venetian lagoons'. On returning to consciousness, she would speak of 'melodious sounds, perfumes of unfamiliar sweetness, and smiles of a celestial countenance', and reproved her anxious relatives, who were gathered round her bed, for awakening her from 'such a delicious dream'.[16]

The more prosaic truth, however, is that she was having a miscarriage which had begun at Pomposa,[17] a fact she took considerable pains to conceal, by attempting to erase, both in a letter of Fanny's and in one of Byron's, the word miscarriage (which is, however, still legible in both cases) and

* GUARINI, *Il Pastor Fido*: Che giova a te, cor mio, l'esser amato?
Che giova a me l'aver sì caro amante?
Perchè, crudo destino,
Ne disunisci tu, s'Amor ne stringe?
Act III, Scene IV.

substituting for it the word 'illness'. It is difficult to understand why she took so much trouble, since at this early date the baby could not possibly have been Byron's—unless she thought it more romantic to be suffering from consumption. Byron himself felt no such delicacy, and on May 15th he was writing to Kinnaird:

'It was my intention to have left Venice tomorrow on my journey to R[avenna]—but the lady has miscarried and her recovery seems more remote than was expected.'[18]

And in a later letter he added: 'I can't tell whether I was the involuntary Cause of the miscarriage, but certes I was not the father of the foetus, for she was three months advanced before our first passade, and whether the Count was the parent or not I can't imagine, perhaps he might.'[19]

The following letter of Fanny's enclosed two letters of Byron's written on May 3rd, one to Teresa and one to Fanny.

FANNY SILVESTRINI TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

Venice *May 4th,* [1819]

My dear Friend: I was in Treviso when I received your letter with the errand about Elmetto* and also the one bringing the news of your illness. I did not answer either the one or the other, wishing to see B[yron] first, and after five days' stay here, having returned to Venice, my first care was to see him, and I found him, I assure you, most unhappy about that unpleasant accident, and immoderately in love with you, I vow, Teresina. Then, when he only saw your letter to me of the 26th and observed that you had not mentioned two letters of his written on the 19th or 20th of last month, he became very ill-humoured, supposing that you had never received them, or you would have acknowledged them.

I reassured him as best I could, telling him that you would have complained openly to me; and this calmed him, and after much talk, all about you, about the journey he is planning to make, and about his love, I left him, assuring him that by the first courier he would *receive your letters,* with the

* Teresa's dog, Elmò.

acknowledgment of his. Yesterday evening, indeed, I sent one to him, so that he should have time to write to you before the post (for you know the Young Gentleman sleeps until two) and, behold, this morning he sent me this answer to forward to you, with a few lines which I enclose, so that you may see and feel in what a *fever* he is about these letters, which doubtless have been lost, although sent to the same address as the one I wrote to you on the evening of the 16th, if I am not mistaken, and which you have already acknowledged. For Heaven's Sake, my dear, ask P[erelli] about it and show all necessary prudence, so that no unpleasant accident may occur.

I have written to you by post a letter that can be shown, so that the Cavaliere,* who knows our correspondence, may not be surprised at seeing it suspended, and begin to draw conclusions. Pray write to me, if he is in a good humour with you, this interests me very much for the sake of your peace. No friend loves you as much as I do, and none will ever give you such good advice as I, because I know by experience how important is a first passion, which often shapes our whole Destiny.

As for the rest, I can again assure you that you are truly loved, that I see in him a violent passion- -not affected, but real. He told me that he had already sent his horses ahead, in order to get ready for the journey, which will crown his happiness by seeing you. Do not give yourself away then, for pity's sake; be reserved in public, remember that He is the most rigid of Censors.

I will tell you, too, for your comfort, that B[yron] is truly faithful to you, because I have not failed to observe him from a distance, and nothing did I see which could make me think him guilty. He swears, indeed, that he could not be, because you are too much attached to him for him to renounce, even for a single instant, the sentiment that you have inspired in him. So be happy, my dear Teresina, and may the ghosts of jealousy and suspicion always keep away from you. Tell P[erelli] to be careful, for God's sake.

* *Guiccioli.*

Today at four I shall go to B[yron] to comfort him, see how he begs me to. Be assured of my friendship and command me.

I embrace you with all my heart and am for life your affectionate friend.

BYRON TO FANNY SILVESTRINI

Venice *May 3rd*, 1819

Just now, at home.

Teresa's letter says nothing about having received my two letters, and I am in the greatest distress. What can have happened to these letters? Pray write to her and assure her that I have not failed to keep my promise, nor in my duty—and that I love her more, much more, than my life. Perhaps your letters will be more fortunate—meanwhile here is my *third*—which you can send to the same address. Do me the very great favour of coming to me *at four o'clock* for a minute. I don't know what to say—or think—T[eresa]'s letter is of the 26th.

Forgive me this and all the other trouble I have occasioned. Ever yours

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

[*Venice*] [*May 3rd*, 1819]

My Soul: This time friendship has prevailed over love, and Fanny has been more fortunate than I in seeing your writing. Your very dear letter from Ravenna, however, caused me great grief by telling me that you have been *ill** although I still trust that this will not bring about other consequences; and it is in this hope that I am writing to ask you to send me more precise news about the state of your health I attributed your illness to riding,—but you write as if there were *some other cause* and do not tell me the real reason—pray clear up the mystery, which you have not wanted to tell the doctors.

Fanny has already come back from Treviso. I am waiting

* The word '*ammalata*' = ill, has been substituted by Teresa for another word which she has partially erased, and which must have been *avvortito* (for *abortito* = miscarried).

for your answer to know when to undertake my journey and how to behave on my arrival. Remember that I have no other object in taking this journey but that of seeing you—and loving you. I neither seek nor want diversions—introductions—Society—all very tedious things. It would suit me better to be with you in a desert, rather than without you in Mahomet's paradise, which is considerably more agreeable than ours.

I shall seek you, you alone; if only I can see you for a few moments every day, I shall be able to spend the rest of the time with your image; if there were to be a minute in which I did not think of you, I would consider myself unfaithful. Our love and my thoughts will be my sole companions, books and horses my only distractions, except for a little trip to Rimini, in order not to break a promise made to a friend in England three years ago[20] that, if ever I should see that city, I would send him any tradition about the story of Francesca (if any such remain there) beside what is to be found in Dante. This story of a fatal love, which has always interested me, now interests me doubly, since Ravenna holds my heart.

I long to embrace you and leave the rest to fate, which cannot be cruel, so long as it leaves me your love. I kiss you with all my soul—a thousand and a thousand times—and am eternally your lover.

P.S. This is my *third* letter—to the *address given*—I trust in God that none has gone wrong.

From the last letter it would appear that Byron was only awaiting his mistress's instructions, to set off for Ravenna. But when at last they came, her plans for the meeting were so childishly imprudent and impracticable—as is shown in Fanny's next letter—that he decided to put off his departure. 'I was still required to set out;' he told Kinnaird, 'but my instructions were a little confused, and though I am really much in love, yet I see no great use in not adopting a little caution.'[21] The experienced Fanny did not fail to observe Mylord's reluctance with dismay, and hastened to send her

young friend some prudent advice. She fully realized what Teresa was still too inexperienced to know, that Byron—like most libertines—was a stickler for public behaviour: 'Remember that He is your severest Censor.'

As for Byron—it is clear that he was both irritated and puzzled. 'She is the queerest woman I ever met with,' he told Kinnaird, 'for in general they cost one something one way or other, whereas by an odd combination of circumstances, I have proved an expense to *Her* which is not my custom. . . .'

But these romantic, uncontrolled love-letters were beginning to alarm him—had he got another Caroline Lamb on his hands? Teresa, he reflected, was 'much prettier and not so savage. But she has the same red-hot head, the same noble disdain of public opinion, with the superstructure of all that Italy can add to such natural dispositions'.[22] His friends, too, were urging him to be cautious. The Venetian ladies, says Teresa, were overcome by jealousy, and in their fear of losing him told tales about her to Hoppner, depicting besides, in the darkest colours, her husband's character for jealousy and violence.[23] And Hoppner was only too delighted to repeat every word of it to his friends.

Hobhouse, too, had something to say on the subject:

'If you are making love to a Romagnuola, and she only nineteen, you will have some jobs upon your hands, which will leave you few spare moments. Don't you go after that terra firma lady; they are very vixens, in those parts especially, and I recollect when I was at Ferrara seeing or hearing of two women in the hospital who had stabbed one another . . . and all *per gelosia*! Take a fool's advice for once, and be content with your Naiads, your amphibious fry; you make a very pretty splashing with them in the lagune, and I recommend constancy to the neighbourhood. Go to Romagna indeed! Go to old Nick, you'll never be heard of afterwards, except your ghost should be seen racing with Guido Cavalcanti in the wood.'[24]

So, with so many influences against her, Teresa's despair-

ing appeals remained unanswered, and Byron stayed on in Venice.

FANNY SILVESTRINI TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

Venice *May 11th,* 1819

My Dear and Amiable Friend: Your letter, dated the 7th of this month has saddened my heart greatly by your illness. I was expecting better news, although your postscript of the 8th consoled me a little, telling me of your improvement after the blood-letting. It is certain that mild remedies do nothing but protract the evil and weakness follows in any case, even without being caused by blood-letting, and the Cavaliere has done very well to allow what is perhaps the only remedy for inflammation. I am impatiently expecting your news and I beg you not to disappoint us.

Two hours after receiving your letter, I went to B[yron] with your enclosure, certain of giving him pleasure, and indeed he showed it in his most cordial manner towards me. I was about to read him my letter first, but he said impatiently, 'and are there no letters for me?' 'Yes,' I said, 'but wait.' —'Well, but it is too long to wait.'

I began, but he made the excuse that he could not see by the light of a single lamp, and went to fetch another, and meanwhile, would you believe it, stole from the sofa, on which it was lying, your letter which I had set aside, and, turning away, opened it and read half of it. Then he could not but come back with the light, and I went on reading my letter, and he his.

I vow to you, my dear, that he seemed to me much affected by your illness. We spoke a great deal about both the letters, he commented a great deal on them and pulled them to pieces, but there is one passage which he simply cannot interpret—that in which you speak of the *Zinnani coming to Venice for the same purpose as the other (the inn-keeper) and for another reason which I will tell you by word of mouth and which I deplored so much that it caused me to write rather*

coldly by last post. He does not know how to interpret all this and begs me to ask you for an explanation. If he does not write by this post, it is because he has already prepared a letter which, now that he has received yours, will not do at all, but he will certainly write by the next post.

Meanwhile, my dearest Teresina, be very certain that *he loves you with the most intense, most vivid and most fervent love,** but not with a love that blinds him to reality, and this, I assure you, will help a great deal to shield you from the storm by which I see you excessively shaken. Listen, but remember and be certain that he loves you, and let that be enough to reassure you. He had prepared everything necessary for his departure, and not before the 20th he would already have started, but reflection and the instructions you gave him, not well suited to your circumstances, have caused him to put it off for the present, unless you can give him some more precise instructions, tempered by prudence.

For instance, the inn will not do for him, nor for you either, for that woman would always be dangerous for you, not for him, and just because of this she might make scenes and compromise you, beware with whom! And secondly, to meet in the theatre would certainly be an unwise step: Love knows no precautions, especially when it burns in a young heart You will give yourself away in the eyes of the public, and soon in those of your husband—what would happen then? The Town is small, the resources for two lovers are few, perhaps none at all,—but do not be afraid, Teresina,—if you absolutely wish it, he will come, he will come at any cost, he will come, I vow it on his behalf, for he told me that if it were a question *of seeing* you *but once, even in your convalescence,* he would certainly do it, and would thus fulfil the wishes of his own heart by following both his love and his duty.

You see, therefore, from these remarks and reflections of his, that he is aiming at your happiness and at preserving that

* This passage has been underlined by Teresa with ink of another colour.

Love which, if known, would bring about tragic consequences, and to him the most cruel of all, that of having to break off your relationship. During our talk, be sure, my dear and tender friend, I wished you to have this satisfaction, but in my heart I applauded him, for I realize that you are caught up in a great storm of passion, while he, familiar with strong emotions, desires you intensely, but more wisely, and does not wish for your destruction. But you will say that he moralizes too much, is too subtle, and I will at once silence you by saying that in spite of all this, one sign from you, and he will fly to your arms. I know for certain and must say it in honour of truth and in your honour, that he has been so full of you that he has not allowed himself any diversion, for all Byron's diversions are proclaimed by the whole of Venice; but now no one hears any more talk about him, than if he were dead in that respect, and however much I have examined his conduct, I have not been able to find him wanting in the least way. This too should console you. You, meanwhile, try to recover, so that your B[yron] may find your beauty, your freshness, and your amiability, unimpaired.

Rest in my friendship and be certain that I shall always speak to you the language of the purest sincerity. Farewell, Farewell. Your Friend.

In spite of Fanny's assurances, it was hardly true that Byron was 'not allowing himself any diversions'. He was, indeed, in the thick of an entanglement with a noble Venetian girl of eighteen, called Angelica, who had been locked up on a diet of 'prayers and bread and water' by 'her flinty-hearted father'. This was a setting to Byron's taste, and on May 18th —according to a letter to John Murray—he was falling into the Grand Canal on a nocturnal visit to her.

'In going, about an hour and a half ago, to a rendez-vous with a Venetian girl . . . I tumbled into the Grand Canal . . . my foot slipped in getting into my gondola to set out (owing to the cursed slippery steps of their palaces) and in I flounced like a Carp, and went dripping like a Triton to my Sea nymph.'[25]

This was the letter which Murray considered 'really too gross',—but what is stranger—or perhaps, since it was Byron, not strange at all—is that on the very night before this absurd incident, he was writing a tender letter to Augusta.

'I have never ceased, nor can cease to feel for a moment that perfect and boundless attachment which bound and binds me to you—which renders me utterly incapable of *real* love for any other human being—for what could they be to me after *you* . . . I can never be other than I have been—and whenever I love anything it is because it reminds me in some way or other of yourself. . . .'[26]

What are we to make of all this? Augusta—and this it is indeed difficult to understand—forwarded the whole letter to Annabella, saying: 'He is surely to be considered a *Maniac* —I do not believe any feelings expressed are by any means permanent—only occasioned by the passing and present reflection and occupation of writing to the unfortunate Being to whom they are addressed. . . .'[27]

This is no place to enter into the Augusta controversy—vital as it is—but perhaps the key to this particular letter, and to Byron's state of mind at this time, lies in the sentence, 'Whenever I love anything, it is because it reminds me in some way or other of yourself'.

Was it not Teresa who sent his thoughts back to Augusta —and the memory of Augusta, that in future would send him back to Teresa? 'I am damnably in love . . . and nothing but hope keeps me alive *seriously*'.[25]

But still he stayed on in Venice—and still Teresa waited.

FANNY SILVESTRINI TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

Venice *May 14th* [1819]

My Sweet Friend: Here is a fresh letter for you. I do not yet know whether I shall receive any from you today; my many domestic duties have prevented me till now from going to the post, but now I will go. You will have received my letter dated the 11th. This evening B[yron] expects me,

probably to talk to me about his journey, as to which I shall encourage him. . . .

He does indeed love you. Do not doubt it, my friend. I embrace you and assure you once again that I am your most faithful FANNY

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

Venice *May 20th*, 1819

My Love: I had written you a letter to go by the last post, which I did not send because yours, which arrived on the same day, was in fact an answer to my questions about the journey we had planned. I hope that Fanny wrote to you, as I begged her to do. Your illness is causing me great anxiety and it seems to me that you have not made up your mind whether my arrival at such a moment would be quite fitting. Meanwhile I am still awaiting your news, to know whether I shall start or not. I remember you told me that in June you would be going to Bologna,—and perhaps, in view of all circumstances, our meeting there would be more convenient, not only for appearances, but also for our own happiness. Certainly there you would be less exposed to gossip than in your own town. I am writing in a great hurry and in very great agitation—but pray believe that I am always the same towards you. I love you—I cannot find words to express to what degree,—but time will prove and you yourself will see, that you have become the only object for which I live and for which I would die.

Your instructions, my Treasure, are a little confused; our first meeting is *not* to take place 'at the theatre', and 'the landlady of the Inn'—of whom you say so many nice things!! Listen, my Soul, if she is as you say, it would be necessary for me to make love to her;—Yes or no? If I do, she will have a certain *right* to play the Spy on us—and if *not*, she will do it out of spite, for a woman of that sort never forgives being despised.

I do not at all understand your allusions to Signora Z[inanni] whom I have not the honour of knowing, except perhaps by sight during the Carnival. How then can that

woman come into our affairs? I do not know her—she does not know me—how can or could it be in her power to distress you? Yet you say you are distressed about her, without explaining the reason.

My love, I kiss you with all my soul—think of me as eternally your most tender and faithful

FANNY SILVESTRINI TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

Venice *May 24th*, 1819

My Friend: And why do you not write, my dear Friend? I will tell you, what I have already said, that your silence is the reason that B[yron] is not already in your arms. He had already twice settled the date of his departure, and twice put it off, always waiting for your letters. The other day, however, after posting my letter dated the 20th, I thought of sending again to the post to see if there were any letters from you, and in fact I did find one, with another inside it, which I at once took to him myself. I cannot express to you his pleasure in receiving it, he assured me that he had slept badly the night before for lack of it, and he finally settled to wait for any letters that might come today, and then to leave tomorrow, Tuesday. So there you are, my Friend, deprived for the second time of a visit you so much desire. But he will certainly come, and if we have your answer he will leave on Saturday of this week. It is therefore for you to press him in your letters: I, too, beg you to do so, so that I may see two people gay and happy.

What you will like to know is that I am writing at his writing-desk, opposite him, while he is looking through your letters, putting some aside, taking up others, in short I can only confirm to you that he loves you very much, my dear Teresina, and that you are happy to possess the heart and affections of the most amiable and most gracious person, while he on his part is happy to be loved by you, whose virtues are always recalled by him to me, with all the *enthusiasm* of love.

Farewell, my dearest Friend. I think that the postscript will please you more than the letter. Your FANNY

P.S. [in Byron's hand]

I should have started on Wednesday, if I had had your letters. Being without them, I am still in a very ill humour and desire nothing but to receive some so as to be able to decide to start. Pray write to me, but in any case I shall leave on Saturday.—I kiss you a thousand times with my whole Heart and am eternally your most tender and faithful Lover.

FANNY SILVESTRINI TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

Venice *May 28th*, 1819

My dear Friend: God be praised, I have finally received three letters of yours at once, one for me, one from Perelli dated the 22nd, which should have come by the previous post, and another written indeed by Perelli, but dictated by you.

So, my poor Teresina, you are ill, and your very illness keeps your medicine away. Your lover, to fulfil his duty and to satisfy his love, and the desires of his heart, should already be in your arms. Three times he has got everything ready for the journey, and three times he was delayed by the uncertainties, the postponements and the vague instructions in your letters. But now he will not wait any longer. He is leaving tomorrow, as you will see from his postscript. He will stay in Bologna, awaiting there the letter you have promised, which I will send on as soon as I get it. So we agreed yesterday evening, when I took him your letter.

I cannot find words to describe to you his anxiety about your silence by the last post. When he saw me yesterday evening, he looked at me without saying a word, and I, knowing how much he needed consolation, at once gave the packet to him: he took it, with an expression of pleasure, then, shutting and opening his fine eyes, he put his hand upon his heart, as if to feel what it was saying to him, then raised his head and began slowly to open one of your letters, trying to make out the words as he came to them, one by

one; finally he read them both, but *his own* with great emotion. Afterwards, he commented on them to me, as he always does, and I feel more than ever that he is not one of those ordinary *lovers* who love *thoughtlessly,* if I may say so, who love themselves, rather than the object, not caring a rap for the consequences. No, my Teresa, he unites with his love a great deal of good sense, which you must not confuse with good *manners,* or *conventionality,* still less with coldness. You will see him and will know for yourself whether I am wrong.

Hasten to get well, but even in that be prudent; forcing the pace might be bad for you. I shall not cease, my tender Friend, to give you the most salutary advice, dictated by affection and experience.

Control yourself, for Mercy's sake, before your husband and the whole of Ravenna. Do not let Love betray you, for he would be betraying himself Do not compromise yourself, if you value your peace; do not compromise him, if he is dear to you. I implore you, my dear, to treat him in public without any partiality, as you would have treated him a year ago. Even in arranging your rendezvous, for mercy's sake measure the time, the place, the circumstances; do not lose your head --all this to avoid making yourself unhappy for ever.

Forgive me, my friend, if I annoy you with this advice; I know only too well that when one is in love and blinded, to the degree that you are, one despises any salutary counsels, and leaps forward towards one's goal.--But, no, no, for mercy's sake, you have a lot of sense and you trust me too much to refuse to listen to me. And now I have said everything; the question is whether you will keep Byron or lose him, and with him your peace and your happiness.

Since the first day I knew you, you have been a person very dear to me; but your present situation has rendered you so interesting that I do not know what I would not do for you. So accept my counsels as a token of my tenderness. Farewell.

[*The letter continues in Byron's hand*]

My Love: I hear with the greatest distress of your illness, and all the more because I had hoped to hear by today's post that you were completely recovered. However, in spite of what you write I shall leave here on Saturday the 29th. I shall go to Bologna and there wait for the letter which you say you are sending me, which Fanny will not fail to forward. My desire is equal to yours, to see you, to embrace you —and to say a thousand times that I love you. I kiss you with all my soul, and am always yours.

[*The letter continues in Fanny's hand*]

Two more lines from Fanny. As, on the eve of a journey, whatever it may be, there is a great deal to do, Mylord is very busy, and so could not write to you this morning; besides, you know his habit of getting up at 2 p.m. and the post has then gone. So he contented himself with writing these few lines under my eyes yesterday evening, leaving space for me to write. Probably he will write to you from Bologna, if indeed he does not arrive before his letter. I beg you, if any freedom of mind remains to you, which I hardly believe, to go on writing to me during his visit, so that I may know about it and rejoice if his coming, as I do not doubt, has brought health to your body and Joy and Paradise to your soul.

I must also tell you, for I am certain you will like to hear it, that Mylord has shown me* such signs of his generosity and his good heart that I have been astounded and shall always be grateful. I do not know whether it is on account of the bond of friendship which binds you and me, and since the motive springs from his love for you, I leave it to your good sense whether or not to mention it; do what you think best. Meanwhile I embrace you, my friend, and I leave your case in your own hands, be very careful. Farewell, farewell.

At last, on June 1st, Byron did get off. 'The die is cast,'

* The letter L (for Lepri), has been written by Teresa over a word which is obviously 'me' or 'towards me' (*me* or *meco*). For obvious reasons, Teresa did not want to leave on record that Fanny had been *paid* by Byron for her good services.

he wrote to Hobhouse, 'and I must (not figuratively but *literally*) pass the Rubicon . . . Everything is to be risked, for a woman one likes.'[29] Before he had reached Padua, however, he was already regretting his decision, and was writing to Hoppner in a thoroughly bad temper. The letter, he said, which he had received from Teresa just before starting, had been more than a little disquieting.

'La G.'s instructions are rather calculated to produce an *éclat,* and perhaps a scene, than any decent iniquity . . . to go to Cuckold a Papal Count, who, like Candide, has already been "the death of two men, one of whom was a priest", in his own house, is rather too much for my modesty when there are several other places at least as good for the purpose. She says they must go to Bologna in the middle of June, and why the devil then drag me to Ravenna? . . . The Charmer forgets that a man may be whistled anywhere *before,* but that *after*——a Journey in an Italian June is a Conscription, and therefore she should have been less liberal in Venice, or less *exigent* at Ravenna.'[30]

A marked contrast to this letter is afforded by the highly romantic poem which he was writing, in these very same days, for Teresa—the *Stanzas to the Po.**

> River, that rollest by the ancient walls
> Where dwells the Lady of my love . . .
>
> A stranger loves the Lady of the land,
> Born far beyond the mountains, but his blood
> Is all meridian, as if never fanned
> By the black wind that chills the polar flood.
>
> My blood is all meridian; were it not,
> I had not left my clime, nor should I be,

* These verses were indubitably addressed to Teresa, and—although Byron told Kinnaird that they were written on June 1st ('I wrote them *this very day* last year, June 1st', he wrote in 1820)—they were probably conceived when Teresa was still at Cà Zèn, which *is* on the Po.

In spite of tortures, ne'er to be forgot,
A slave again of love,—at least of thee.

A year later he said of these verses that they were written 'in red-hot earnest'*—and most probably, in spite of all he wrote to Hoppner—it was true.

By June 6th he was in Bologna—'where I am settled like a sausage and shall be broiled like one if this weather continues'—and was making use of some letters of introduction which had been given to him in Venice—one to Count Marescalchi and one to Count Francesco Rangone, the literary gentleman who was collecting anecdotes about him and who wrote at once to a friend: 'Lord Byron has arrived and I am engaged in paying him my court.' But literary men—or foreign provincial noblemen, for that matter—were not companions whom Byron found enlivening, and Rangone was obliged to add to his notes about the great English poet that he was often silent in conversation, and did not appear to enjoy listening to long stories.

Byron escaped from him and went sightseeing—first to look at Domenichino's pictures and then to the cemetery, where the custodian showed him the skull of a capuchin monk ('One of my best friends—I begged his head of his brethren—I put it in lime and boiled it:') and the monument of a beautiful Princess Barberini, whose hair, after two hundred years in her grave, was still found to be intact and 'as yellow as gold'.[31]

But then it was time to drive back to the city—and still there was no news from Teresa. Why could the tiresome woman not write? Should he go on or return to Venice? The nights were oppressive and the rooms at the Albergo del Pellegrino intolerably stuffy and hot. He told Hoppner to

* June 8th, 1920. Unpublished letter to Hobhouse. 'You say the Po verses are fine; I thought so little of them that they lay by me a year uncopied, but they were written in *red-hot* earnest, and that made them good.' On sending the poem to England, he had written; 'they must not be published' because they were 'written upon private feelings and passions'.

prepare for his return. But in the morning he woke up in a different mood; he was already half way, he would go on, after all, and see what Teresa was about. On the outside cover of his letter to Hoppner he scribbled the words: 'I am just setting off for Ravenna, June 8th, 1819. I changed my mind this morning, and decided to go on.'[32]

II: RAVENNA

How I have loved the twilight hour and thee.
Don Juan

It was on the morning of June 10th that Byron's great, gaudy travelling-coach[1]—adorned with his coat of arms, and large enough to hold his bed, his travelling-library and a vast assortment of china, linen and plate—drew up at the Porta Sisi of Ravenna. The coach, the travellers were told, might proceed no further, for it was the feast of Corpus Domini, and on that day the narrow streets—shaded by great awnings which gave them the appearance of enclosed galleries—were kept clear for the passage of the procession to the cathedral square. The pavements were strewn with flower-petals, and the façades of the palaces were hung with tapestries and brocades, and adorned with gold-framed mirrors and holy pictures, and even with portraits of the owner's ancestors, so that the whole city looked like one vast drawing-room.[2]

Unwillingly, in the midst of the curious, jostling crowd, the traveller descended. His eyes fell at once upon an extremely pretty young woman—and with a flourish he asked her the way to the inn. She told him, and then—for Ravenna was a very small town, and he had lighted upon a friend of Teresa's—she at once hastened to Palazzo Guiccioli, to tell Teresa about her encounter. 'Never,' she exclaimed, 'had she met a man of such beauty.' The Countess felt assured that it could only be Lord Byron.*

Teresa was at that moment engaged in writing a letter to her lover, whom she believed to be still in Bologna, contradicting her previous pressing invitations and begging him to postpone his visit. She had had a relapse, with high fever, and feared that the difficulties of seeing each other while she

* 'Vie', p. 115. The friend was Signora Geltrude Vicari, of whom more will be heard later.

was still unwell would be insuperable—and besides, she added, she did not feel she 'deserved' so great an attention. She had already written all this to Fanny Silvestrini in Venice—but had addressed her letter to Mme Francesca instead of Fanny, so that the letter had not arrived. But now that at last Byron had come, all her doubts and hesitations were forgotten.

Byron, meanwhile, had presented a letter of introduction to Count Giuseppe Alborghetti, the Secretary General of the Province, and had been civilly invited to the Count's box at the theatre that evening.* On his arrival, his host inquired whether he had any acquaintances in Ravenna.

'"Yes," replied Byron, "I am very friendly with Count and Countess Guiccioli." "But alas," replied Alborghetti, "you will not be able to see the young lady, as they say she is at death's door." At this sudden and unexpected news, given so abruptly, Byron lost his head—and, unable to control his emotion, replied that if the lady should die, he hoped he would not survive her.'

The effect was all that can be imagined. 'Count Alborghetti, who had believed that Byron was attracted to Ravenna by literary interests—by Dante's tomb, the Byzantine monuments, and memories of Dryden, Boccaccio and Gaston de Foix—gaped round-eyed at the emotion of the young Lord . . . Fortunately', Teresa adds, 'Count Guiccioli, who had caught sight of Lord Byron, then called on him in the box and calmed him by giving him better news.'[3]

Byron took up his abode in the uncomfortable little inn in the Via di Porta Sisi, which was the best that the city could afford and waited for Teresa's bidding.

The following letters, which enable us to follow the whole course of Byron's and Teresa's affairs during the next feverish two months, are enclosed in a folder inscribed in Teresa's

* Conte Giuseppe Alborghetti (1776-1852) was a nobleman and writer of occasional verses, which had won him some distinction. Teresa describes him as 'a man of intelligence, and Chief of the government of the Lower Romagna in the absence of the Prince Legate'.

writing: *Second Series: 19 notes from Lord Byron.*[4] At the top of some of the letters (in Teresa's writing) is the word *ostble* (*ostensible*—can be shown). The explanation is also in Teresa's writing: 'Dans ces billets il y a à choisir . . . des phrases seulement . . . parceque ils témoignent tous de son excellent cœur et de ses sentiments de loyauté et de délicatesse.'

The first of the following letters was sent to Teresa by hand immediately after Byron's arrival—the second, later in the evening, after coming back from the theatre.

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI[5]

June 10th, 1819

My Treasure: Here I am, in Ravenna. If you can arrange to see me I shall be happy—if not, I have at any rate not broken my word—and I hope at least to hear that your health is better. Always.

June 10th, 1819[6]

My Love: I have been to the theatre without finding you—and was sorry to hear that you are still weak. Your husband came to see me in the box and replied courteously to the few inquiries I dared to make at that moment. Count Z[inanni] then turned up and was so insistent that I should go to his box that I could not avoid paying that call without being rude—and I did go there for a moment.

My sweetest Soul—believe that I live for you alone—and do not doubt me. I shall stay here until I know what your wishes really are: and even if you cannot arrange to see me I shall not go away. I beseech you to command me as entirely and eternally yours. I would sacrifice all my hopes for this world and all that we believe we may find in the other—to see you happy. I cannot think of the state of your health without sorrow and tears. Alas, my Treasure! How much we endured—and shall still have to endure! And you so young—so beautiful—so good—you have had to suffer through my fault—what a thought!

I kiss you a thousand thousand thousand times with all my soul.

P.S. I sent you a note this evening by means of P[erelli]. But the bearer did not find him until midnight. I am writing now after the theatre before going to bed. I hope you will receive both.

June 11th, 1819[7]

My Love: Pray instruct me how I am to behave in these circumstances. I am not clear as to what it is best to do. I think of staying here until you go—and then finding a way of meeting in Bologna, and then in Ferrara. But all these plans depend upon your wishes I have no life now, except in you. My peace is lost in any case—but I should prefer death to this uncertainty. Pray forgive and pity me. Remember that I am here because you ordered me to come—and that every moment in which I do not . . . but it is useless to write. I feel inexpressibly unhappy. I do see you—but how?—in what a state?

I have tried to distract myself with this farce of visiting antiquities—it seems quite intolerably tedious—but at the moment everything else is equally displeasing. The little that interests me– Dante's tomb and a few things in the library —I have already seen with an indifference made pardonable by the state of my heart. You see that I do not go into Society —and that I only seek ways of being near to you—but how? You are so surrounded · I am a foreigner in Italy—and still more a foreigner in Ravenna– -and naturally little versed in the customs of the country—I am afraid of compromising you. For myself there is little more to fear—my fate is already decided. It is impossible for me to live long in this state of torment—I am writing to you in tears—and I am not a man who cries easily When I cry my tears come from the heart, and are of blood.

At this point (midnight) I have received your letters and the handkerchief– and I am a little calmer. I shall study to do all that you command.

I am continuing this note without changing a word—to show you what sort of an inferno I have carried in my heart since my arrival.

If you knew what it costs me to control myself in your presence! But I will not say more—let us hope that time will teach me hypocrisy. You speak of 'my sacrifices'—don't say any more—my heart is already sacrificed, and after that victim, I can offer no other. A sign from you will suffice to lead me or send me—not only to Bologna, but to the grave.

Do not mistrust me—I do not mistrust you—but the difficulties of our circumstances. I should like to hope—but—but—always a *But*—meanwhile *you* hope—and that is enough.

I thank you—I embrace you—I kiss you a thousand thousand times.

P.S. Why send me back my handkerchief? I see from the mark that it is the one I gave you on the evening before your departure. I would not give you back a *thread* of yours (which I always keep by me) to obtain an empire.*

Byron's first visit to Teresa had taken place, as the preceding letter shows, on the day after his arrival, 'although it was a Friday and he did not like to do anything important on that day'. Guiccioli himself had come to fetch him in his coach, and had accompanied him to Teresa's bedside, where she, feverish and flushed and 'surrounded by friends and relations', was not able to speak to him alone even for a moment 'He returned home', she tells us, 'extremely melancholy.'[8] And although during the following days he called upon her as often as twice a day—'a frequency', she would have us believe, 'sanctioned by Italian custom and which surprised no one',[9]—his visits continued to take place in the presence of her observant relations.

* The handkerchief—of fine white cambric—was kept by Teresa in the box that contained her other 'relics'. Medwin gives an amusing account of the private theatricals in Pisa, in which Byron took the part of Iago. '"Shakespeare was right", said he, after he had finished, "in making Othello's jealousy turn upon that circumstance. The handkerchief is the strongest proof of love, not only among the Moors, but all Eastern nations".' (MEDWIN, *Conversations with Lord Byron*, p. 201.)

That first week in Ravenna, indeed, was not a happy time. The sleepy little provincial town to which Byron was to become so much attached had, at first sight, little to offer the traveller. The members of the local nobility, to whom his letters of introduction were addressed, hastened to call upon their distinguished visitor and to take him to see their sights: Dante's tomb, the Rotonda, the great Byzantine mosaics in S. Apollinare in Classe—the fine manuscripts in the library. But Byron, at best, was not much of a sightseer—and now he was far too much preoccupied with Teresa to care about anything else. He seems, indeed, to have made this only too clear to his hosts.

'The common opinion', wrote Conte Giulio Rasponi acidly to Rangone, 'is that the Palazzo Guiccioli has impressed him more than the Rotonda and the ruins of Theodoric. In any case his stay is a good thing for the town and for the people who see him, although his manner of life and preoccupation with his affections do not often render him accessible. I have not failed to offer him my humble services in various forms, but he, very much reserved, has only made a very limited use of them.'[10]

For indeed Teresa took up all his thoughts. After reading the daily letters that he wrote to her at this time, it seems no longer possible to maintain that this was only a half-hearted relationship. Grudgingly as he had come to Ravenna—flippantly as he still wrote about the affair to his English friends—it is evident that he was now completely absorbed by Teresa. He sat up all night writing to her, in tears; he made a scene when he saw her talking to someone else; he was touchy, uncertain of himself, and so moody that everyone observed it. 'Lord Byron is staying on at Ravenna', wrote that incorrigible gossip, Rangone, to his brother in Venice. 'They tell me of his intense passion and his great melancholy.' He even reached the point of asking Teresa, in so many words, whether—if the moment should come when she would have to choose between her husband and himself,—she would elope with him.

There is in his letters not only an unmistakable note of

passion, but a curious lack of self-confidence, a deep discomfort. 'I am a foreigner in Italy,' he told Teresa, 'and still more a foreigner in Ravenna, and naturally little versed in the customs of the country. I am afraid of compromising you.' All day, except in the few hours that he could be with her, he sat in the hot, dingy little inn—and wondered why he had come, and whether indeed he should stay. Did Teresa really care for him? And even if she did, what could come of it all? Everyone in Ravenna was prodigiously civil—but it was not for them that he was there. Moreover—accustomed as he was to dealing with husbands—there was something singularly disconcerting about the old Count. He, too, was only too civil—but what lay beneath his formal, half-ironic courtesy? 'I can't make him out at all, he wrote to Hoppner, 'he visits me frequently and takes me out (like Whittington, the Lord Mayor) in a coach and *six* horses. The fact appears to be, that he is completely *governed* by her—for that matter, so am I.' The letter ends: 'My coming—going— and everything depends upon *her* entirely.'[11]

The pages of the 'Vie', at this period, are written in the form of a diary, so that it is possible to follow in detail all the ups and downs of the lovers' hopes and fears. By June 14th Teresa was better, and was up when Byron came to see her—but in the evening she was obliged to send him some bad news. The Abate Perelli, who had been the transmitter of their letters, had gone off to the country with Teresa's uncle. Byron was greatly upset, but nevertheless called on her both in the afternoon and evening—finding her, once again, surrounded by people, but better. 'Letter of devotion after leaving me,' she adds— a masterpiece of passion, devotion and generosity!'[12] Here is the letter which pleased her so greatly, and which ended with the suggestion that they should run away together.

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI[13]

June 14th, 1819

Perhaps I am mistaken—my Love—but this sudden country expedition of your uncle's with P[erelli] makes me afraid

that we have been betrayed—and that P[erelli] has been taken off to the country to interrupt our correspondence. Passion makes me fear everything and everyone. If I lose you, what will become of me? Was this journey planned before my arrival—or not? If *not*, I feel very suspicious. In any case, how shall we manage to get our letters? How shall I be able to get even this one to you, without risk of a discovery which would be sad for you—and for me, fatal. In losing me you lose very little,—but I am unlikely to survive a break with you. Until now the fruits of my journey have been rather bitter—but if you are pleased, I do not regret what I am suffering—for I am suffering for your sake.

Love has its martyrs like religion—with this difference—that the victims of love lose their Paradise in this world, without reaching it in the other, while the devout of the other faith gain by the change.

Meanwhile—my Love—tell me what I am to do? Remain here?—or return to Bologna? If trouble arises there is only one adequate remedy, that is, to go away together—and for this a great Love is necessary—and some courage. Have you enough?

I can already anticipate your answer. It will be long and divinely written—but it will end in a negative.

I kiss you from my heart ten million times.

Byron was right. Teresa's answer was long, poetic and full of numerous good reasons why she should not run away with him. Nor indeed did he yet grasp, perhaps, how unheard-of a thing he was asking. The essence of *serventismo*, as he was to realize later, was that the lady should *stay* with her husband. But, after this letter of his, he had no right to complain later on that he had been inveigled into 'a romance in the Anglo fashion'. It was he who had first desired it.

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI[14]

June 15th, 1819

You are right—but when one can *argue* a great deal, Love is not capable of very great sacrifices. Your answer is what I

expected, it does not surprise me, and that is enough. Remember that my proposal was not made for the present time. I only asked, in case the alternative arose, what you would do? You are right in your answer, and now I know what my decision must be.

What you say is very true, only it has come a little too late —for the greatest injury to . . . was already done in Venice. To go away would be the height of imprudence—a thing only to be done if we were discovered—in case you were obliged to abandon *one* of us two. But forgive me if I say (now that we are speaking of morals) that the greatest injury is in the deception, not the desertion, of a man who is already in the condition of a great number of husbands.

Besides, I esteem him very much—and would make friends with him willingly—at any cost.

Returning to the *alternative*—I can tell you that I too should lose a great deal, but I prefer you to anything else—for I love you. But I will not speak any more of Love—now that you cannot doubt *mine,* after I have shown you how completely I would sacrifice everything.

Meanwhile you have not answered my question—that is, whether I shall meet your wishes by staying here -or by leaving for Bologna.

I kiss you and am always.

Teresa, however, continued to be most exasperating. To his question whether he was to remain in Ravenna or go away, she merely replied with a long disquisition on *The Lament of Tasso,* which she had just read,— insisting on being told 'the *secret* of the suffering which produced this poem, and who was the original of Eleonora'.[15] Byron's annoyance, which Teresa's ill-timed poetic flights were so often to arouse in him, is expressed in his answer.

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI[16]

June 15th, 1819

My Soul: I speak of *Love* and you answer me about *Tasso.* I write about *you,* and you ask me about '*Eleonora*'. If you

want to render me even more insane than he, I can assure you you are on the way to succeeding. In fact, my dear, your inquiries seem to me superfluous. You know, at least in part, my story, and even without it can imagine that, in order to depict strong passions, it is necessary to have experienced them. One of these days (if *ever, ever* they occur again, which I, alas, doubt) when we are alone,—I will tell you whether your conjectures as to the original of the portrait are founded on truth or not. If you know what love is—if you love me—if you feel—how can you at this moment—seeing the state in which we find ourselves—think or speak of imaginary things? Have we not only too much *reality*? I swear that these last few days have been among the most unhappy of my life. Love—doubt—uncertainty—the fear of compromising you when I see you in the presence of others—the impossibility of seeing you alone—the thought of losing you for ever—these combine to destroy the few hopes that inspired me until now.

Society disturbs me—solitude terrifies me. My only consolation is to see you recovered in health.

I am awaiting with the greatest impatience your answer to my two letters. What shall I do?

It seems to me that your father looks at you with some suspicion- and that naturally he does not much like to see me so near you--and that this journey of your uncle with Perelli and the sudden departure of your friend [amica] are not the happiest presages for us. Meanwhile my coming to Ravenna, as I foresaw, instead of increasing our understanding, has diminished it. Oh Venice—Venice—*there* we were united, at least for a few hours!

P.S. Forgive me if my answer has been *too English* in the first lines of this note—but I have not come to Italy to speak of myself and my own doings—but rather to forget my life of *beyond the mountains*—and above all, to love you—*you*, my only and last delight That is why I showed impatience in answering your question whether E was the . . . etc. etc. . . .

But now there was a change for the better. Teresa's fever

left her, and at last the doctor allowed her to go out again. On the evening of June 6th, at 7 o'clock, 'she came down the stairs of her palazzo leaning on Byron's arm. He seated himself in her closed carriage beside her; behind them, in another carriage, rode the Count and some other friends'.[17] It was their first time alone together, since he had come to Ravenna. They reached the great pine-wood that lies between Ravenna and the sea, at sunset. 'The whole world was fresh and green; the nightingales were singing, the crickets chirping. Lord Byron was charmed by the landscape; he seemed at once happy and melancholy.' It was on that evening, says Teresa, as they drove home together through the forest and watched the reflection of the sunset lights in the still pools under the pine-trees, that she asked Byron, since he had already written about Tasso, to write something also about Italy's greatest poet, Dante. 'Your wishes are my commands', he replied—and the next day began *The Prophecy of Dante* which he dedicated to her.[18]

LADY! If for the cold and cloudy clime
Where I was born, but where I would not die,
Of the great Poet-Sire of Italy
I dare to build the imitative rhyme,
Harsh Runic copy of the South's sublime
THOU art the cause; and howsoever I
Fall short of his immortal harmony,
Thy gentle heart will pardon me the crime.
Thou, in the pride of Beauty and of Youth,
Spakest; and for thee to speak and be obeyed
Are one; but only in the sunny South
Such sounds are uttered and such charms displayed,
So sweet a language from so fair a mouth—
Ah! to what effort would it not persuade?

It was at this period, too, that having seen on Teresa's table Dante's *Inferno*, he read with her the verses about Paolo and Francesca. Teresa asked him whether it had ever been translated into English. 'Non tradotto, ma tradito', he replied[19] —and thereupon promised her to try his hand at a better rendering.

But still, when they were alone together, they would go over and over the same ground: what did the future hold for them? It is clear from the letters that Byron repeated his suggestion to elope with her, and that she again drew back. According to Moore,—who seems to have seen some letters which have since been lost, and to which Teresa does not refer in the 'Vie'—she 'even proposed, as a means of escaping the ignominy of an elopement, that she should, like another Juliet, "pass for dead"',[20] a proposal which must have afforded Byron some amusement. For the moment the project was shelved; but Teresa now knew—or thought she knew—how completely her lover was committed.

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI[21]

June 16th, 1819

My Love: Let us not talk about the subject any more now. It is enough that you cannot doubt me, knowing what I would be capable of doing for you. In any case and in all circumstances your happiness will be my only care. If a time comes of trouble and disturbance caused by our love, then you shall decide, according to your feelings. I shall not try to persuade you or to influence your choice. My '*duties*', dearest Teresa, are always the same—and it seems to me I am showing every possible eagerness to fulfil them.

Everything depends on you—my life—my honour—my love. Love me, then—my feeling for you deserves to be returned: I suffer so much in loving, that I have tried to avoid strong passions in these last three years—but in vain, as you see now. To love you is my crossing of the Rubicon and has already decided my fate.

I shall not fail to carry out all that you say—I kiss you 100000 times

June 17th, 1819[22]

Yes—my Love—I am *very indifferent* to you. I have travelled here from Venice—I have been so happy after my arrival—my diversions have been so many—they cheer me so greatly

—yes—you are right in this as in everything—there is no doubt as to my *indifference.* Think a little—my Treasure—and then I shall challenge anyone whatever to find in my conduct ever since I have known you the slightest thing that deserves such a reproach. I love you only too much, but in *Love, too much* is not enough. This I feel, too—for I believe that you do not love me to the degree that I long for; —and meanwhile I am very sure that my heart is more engaged than yours—but that should be so—for you deserve a love which I could neither hope for nor inspire. Such a love I feel for you—do you want proofs?

You tell me that I, and not '*riding*', have done you so much harm—this means that the cause of the illness* was a fault of mine. This is the first time that you have said this to me—and being a rather serious accusation—and seriously made—I should like to have some explanation.—If you only knew . . . but—it is useless—all I write, or say.

My Love—We have surely enough trouble without making ourselves unhappy by ill-founded suspicions and torments caused by wounded pride, perhaps unnecessarily. A slave is not more humble in the presence of his master—than I am in yours,—but do not abuse your power, for you have too much. Think only if I deserve the reproaches of your last note—and then forgive . . . *yourself* if you can.

Believe me eternally your most unchangeable and loving

The mention of 'the hope of travelling together' in the following letter suggests that Teresa's ingenious brain was already making plans to enable her and Byron to set forth together for Venice—a plan which they did at last carry out in August. But for the time being Byron had no intention of moving from Ravenna, and he sent off to Alexander Scott, in Venice, a series of urgent letters (on June 10th, 20th and 26th) telling him to send him his saddle-horses and his carriage-horses, and to forward all his English letters. Hoppner and Scott—united in their jealousy of 'La Guiccioli'—

* Under the word 'illness' the word 'abortion' can be read.

delayed as long as they could. 'There could surely be no difficulty', wrote Byron to Scott, after waiting for ten days. 'It will be very disagreeable if he is not set off by this time.'[23] But at last his instructions were carried out—and he finally told Scott that he had 'no intention of returning to Venice for some time'. 'All has gone on very well here—as you may suppose by my stay. The Lady does whatever she pleases with me—and luckily the same things please both.'[24]

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI[25]

June 20th, 1819

'And you could'—What is there that you could not, my Love, if you wish it?

There can be nothing more delightful to me than the hope of 'travelling together'.

Your little note ends—or rather does *not* end—when will you tell me the rest?

As I have said to you many times, my fate is in your hands; where you are is my country—and what you say, my law. Meanwhile I am longing for the hour when I see you again—and I kiss you untiringly with all my soul.

The next of Byron's notes[26] consists only of two fragments, which have been cut out of a longer letter. It obviously refers to one of their early quarrels—possibly to the same attack of jealousy described in the following letters.

Of these attacks of jealousy Byron himself wrote to Hobhouse: 'Hitherto all had gone on *well*, with the usual *exception* of some *gelosie*, which are the fault of the climate, and of the conjunction of two such capricious people as the Guiccioli and the *inglese*.'[27]

The sentences which still remain of the letter are:

'I am going to bed—and it would be better for me if my sleep (if indeed sleep is possible for me) could become eternal how to make him forget to come to you Perhaps this is only a prologue—and you will

.

But I loved you—and after having been a man well-known for his independence and strength of mind Unfortunately for me he has lost his wings. Perhaps he will find them again, at least I hope so. Farewell.'

Teresa appears rather to have enjoyed these outbursts of jealousy as tributes to her power, for Byron's next letter is headed by her: 'Billet de jalousie *magnifique—passionné—sublime mais* très injuste. Il ne me connaissait encore que depuis trop peu!!![28]

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI[29]

[*no date*]

'My thoughts cannot find rest in me'*—I was right then: what is that man doing every evening for so long beside you in your box? 'So we are agreed'—fine words; '*You* are agreed', it appears. I have noticed that every time I turned my head toward the stage you turned your eyes to look at that man—and this, after all that had happened today! But do not fear, tomorrow evening I shall leave the field clear to him. I have no strength to bear a fresh torment every day—you have made me despicable in my own eyes—and perhaps soon in those of others.—Have you not seen my torments? Have you not pitied them? I forgive you what you have made me suffer—but I can never forgive myself the weakness of heart which has prevented me until now from taking the only honourable step in such circumstances—that of bidding you goodbye—for ever—

Midnight

My time for sleep before I knew you.

Let me go—it is better to die from the pain of separation, than from that of betrayal—my life now is a constant agony.

* TASSO, *Gerusalemme Liberata*, Canto X°. The original line: '*I suoi pensieri in lui dormir non ponno*' ('His thoughts cannot find rest in him') was placed by Byron at the beginning of his *Corsair*.

I have enjoyed a unique and final happiness in your arms—but—oh God! how much those moments are costing me!—and *they* [cost] *this*!—now that I am writing to you alone—completely alone. I had no one but you in the world—and now, not having you any more (without the heart, what is the rest?) solitude has become as tedious as society—for that image which I pictured as so pure, so dear, is now nothing but a perfidious and menacing shadow,—and yet—always *yours*.

[*No date*][80]

My Love: Why not after dinner? What do I care about the 'promenade' and the 'prescription'? You well know *what* I 'like'—every day in which we do not see and *love* each other, in deed as in our hearts, is (at least for me) the most irreparable of losses, one happiness the less.

Tell me *when*—ever and entirely thine

'The most irreparable of losses.' It was at this time that Byron—already conscious of a physical decay far in advance of his years, and of a corresponding exhaustion—was writing to Webster: 'At thirty I feel there is no more to look forward to . . . My hair is half grey, and the Crow's-foot has been rather lavish of its indelible steps. My hair, though not gone, seems going, and my teeth remain by way of courtesy.'[81]

These were the times of weariness and self-distaste which Byron—like an over-tired child at a party, who, dropping with fatigue, yet clamours for one game more—attempted to defeat always by the same method: some fresh sensation that would reconfirm for him the sense of his own reality. Life had become tasteless for him, except in the pursuit of passion. And passion brought pain—and pain, weariness—and then he was off on the treadmill once again. 'At thirty-one', he wrote to Hobhouse in the same strain, 'so few years, months, days, remain, that "carpe diem" is not enough. I have been obliged to crop even the seconds, for who can trust tomorrow? Tomorrow, quotha! To-hour, *to-minute*. I

cannot repent me (I try very often) so much of anything I have done, as of anything I have left undone. Alas! I have been idle and have the prospect of early decay, without having seized every available instant of my pleasurable years'.[32]

This was the high summer of Teresa's and Byron's passion —when Byron's fears for her health and his consciousness of his own exhaustion, only served to fan his feverish thirst. Her youth, her freshness, her vitality (in spite—or even increased by—her illness) all gave him an illusion of renewed vigour, of a last lease of life.

During all this time neither Byron nor Teresa—since they did not at the moment require her services—thought it necessary to write to Fanny. She, however, kept up an eloquent flow of tender inquiries. 'Pray,' she begged Byron, 'in an interval of rest, take a moment to remember Fanny as one who has an infinite love for Teresina, and the highest regard for Mylord.'[33]

The next week, under cover to Don Perelli, she was writing to Teresa herself: 'Your long silence is making me very anxious . . . Is it possible that you should have forgotten me? . . . My dear Friend, write if you can and tell me everything. I hope it will not be long before I see and embrace you, if the Cavaliere your Spouse does not change his mind.'[34]

But neither Byron nor Teresa answered, and early in July she was again appealing to Byron: 'I turn to you, Mylord, begging you for pity's sake to relieve me of a painful uncertainty and tell me by what illness she [Teresa] is affected and how severely.'[35]

For Teresa was still seriously ill, and as the weeks passed and her cough and fever continued, Byron's letters to his English friends lost their deliberate flippancy and revealed a deep anxiety, even if expressed with characteristic egoism: 'Thus it is with everything and everybody for whom I feel anything like a real attachment. "War, death or discord doth lay siege to them." I never even could keep alive a dog that I liked or that liked me.'[36]

To John Murray he was even franker: 'I see my *Dama*

every day at the proper (and improper) hours; but I feel seriously uneasy about her health, which seems very precarious. In losing her, I would lose a being who has run great risks on my account, and whom I have every reason to love —but I must not think this possible. I do not know what I *should* do if she died, but I ought to blow my brains out—and I hope that I should.'[37]

It being evident that the Ravenna doctors were not doing Teresa any good, Byron prevailed upon Count Guiccioli to let him send for his own doctor from Venice, Professor Aglietti. To Alexander Scott he wrote:

'I have sent again to Venice for Dr. Aglietti—the Guiccioli is seriously ill, and her state menaces consumption—I need hardly say how this occupies and distresses me . . . If you can say anything to Aglietti to persuade him to come, in addition to what I have written—pray do—I have written at Count Guiccioli's one request, and enclosed besides a long medical statement of her case.

'Although there is no doubt on that score, yet you may tell Aglietti *I myself* will be responsible for his time, trouble and expence, etc., being reimbursed, and his coming will be to me also a great personal favour. I can say no more.'[38]

Professor Aglietti—who granted Byron's request and, after obtaining the permission of the Governor of Venice, at once set off for Ravenna—was a very famous doctor, and, by all accounts, a most delightful man. A poet and a scholar, as well as a physician,—a doctor who openly stated that he did not believe in medicine—his enormous figure was to be seen, with his pockets bulging with books, peering into every bookshop in the streets of Venice. We are told that, before his arrival in a patient's house, the family would hastily clear away any books, pictures or old etchings in the halls and passages, since otherwise he would stand all day looking at them, instead of visiting the patient. Not that he did not take his profession seriously. He had a remarkable gift for diagnosis, and—being the kindest of men—would even call upon a serious patient as often as eight times a day. But he had

little patience with feminine vapours, and if called in to such a case, would sit by the lady's bed and—while pretending to feel her pulse,—would drop off for a short nap.[39]

His nights, at the end of his long day's work, were often spent in study, and sometimes, in the morning, the maid would find him still in his chair, where he had fallen asleep over his books. His appearance, we are told, was 'at once grave and friendly, with simple, easy manners, joined to a peculiar and sweet courtesy. He had a flexible nature, indulgent, warm in his affections, sensitive to all forms of beauty, loved by all, welcomed by all'. But his strongest quality was kindness, 'a kindness which coloured with affection his behaviour and his work as a doctor. The imagination slumbered in him, unless moved by the heart'.

Byron, who had always considered him the best doctor in Europe, was no doubt aware of this last quality, too, and perhaps the great doctor's imagination was moved by the lovers' plight. We have no record of what he prescribed for Teresa (except that it included 'a complete change of regime', the application of leeches and some 'Peruvian bark' of extreme bitterness, which Byron promptly sent for from Venice)—but we do know that on his departure he left renewed hope behind him, and that Teresa and her family considered his visit to have been the turning-point in her illness, and Byron, consequently, her 'saviour'.

Before leaving Ravenna the great doctor of the famous poet —both dressed, we are told, in their best clothes (*abiti di grandissima gala*) took part in a solemn little ceremony. They drove together, in Byron's carriage, to Dante's monument—where Byron solemnly placed a volume of his own poems upon the tombstone. The contemporary who describes the scene, Filippo Mordani, adds that 'every time that the poet passed in front of that monument, he bared his head; and I myself have seen it several times'.[40]

And very soon—whether owing to Aglietti's prescriptions, to the Peruvian bark, or to the daily presence of her lover—Teresa really did begin to get better. By then, too, Byron's

horses had arrived—and although the midsummer heat was intense, the two lovers rode together every evening in the Pine Forest, 'so full of pastime and prodigality.'

Sweet Hour of Twilight!—in the solitude
Of the pine forest, and the silent shore
Which bounds Ravenna's immemorial wood,
Rooted where once the Adrian wave flowed o'er,
To where the last Caesarean fortress stood,
Evergreen forest! which Boccaccio's lore
And Dryden's lay made haunted ground to me,
How have I loved the twilight hour and thee![41]

Byron, now in the highest of spirits, took up his pen and wrote to tell Augusta all about it.

'I write from Ravenna—I came here on account of a Countess Guiccioli—a Girl of Twenty married to a very rich old man of Sixty about a year ago; with her, last winter, I had a liaison according to the good old Italian custom—she miscarried in May—and sent for me here—and here I have been these two months.

She is pretty—a great Coquette—extremely vain—excessively affected—clever enough—without the smallest principle—with a good deal of imagination and some passion. She had set her heart on carrying me off from Venice out of vanity—and succeeded—and having made herself the subject of general conversation has greatly contributed to her recovery.

. . .

I send you a sonnet which this faithful Lady had made for the nuptials of one of her relations in which she swears the most *alarming constancy* to her husband—is not this good?—You may suppose my *face* when she showed it to me—I could not help laughing—one of *our* laughs. All this is very absurd—but you see that I have good morals at bottom.

She is an equestrian too—but a bore in her rides—for she can't guide her horse—and he runs after mine—and tries to bite him—and then she begins screaming, in a high hat and Sky-blue riding habit—making a most absurd figure—and

embarrassing me and both our grooms—who have the devil's own work to keep her from tumbling—or having her cloathes torn off by the trees and thickets of the Pine forest.'[42]

But Teresa, in the true romantic tradition, scorned to chronicle any such undignified episodes as these. *Her* account is all fine scenery and poetry.

'They would remain for hours together,' she wrote, 'in the deep forest shade—dismounting and seating themselves under the great resinous pines. They walked on thyme and other scented herbs . . . Lord Byron's delight was that of a poet, hers of a happy young woman.'[43]

They would linger there together until the last hour of twilight, when the vesper bell, heard faintly through the trees from the tower of the Duomo, would call them home again.

At that moment, in Ravenna, two pages would come out on to the marble balcony of the Palazzo del Comune, where two great torches had been lit, and would play on their trumpets a short air—while the faithful in the streets bowed their heads and knelt in prayer, reciting the 'Ave Maria'.[44]

Ave Maria! blesséd be the hour!
The time, the clime, the spot, where I so oft
Have felt that moment in its fullest power
Sink o'er the earth—so beautiful and soft,—
While swung the deep bell in the distant tower,
Or the faint dying day-hymn stole aloft,
And not a breath crept through the rosy air,
And yet the forest leaves seemed stirred with prayer.
Ave Maria! 't is the hour of prayer!
Ave Maria! 't is the hour of Love!*

* *Don Juan, III,* XL, cii-ciii. 'I have known in Italy', said Byron to Dr. Kennedy in Greece, 'a person engaged in sin, and when the vesper-bell has rung, stop and repeat the Ave Maria, and then proceed in the sin: absolution cured all.' KENNEDY, *Conversations on Religion with Lord Byron,* p. 150.

At dusk, returning home, Byron and Teresa only separated to meet again 'at the theatre or at an assembly—*en tête-à-tête* or in the presence of others—it little mattered, so long as they breathed the same air.'[45]

Such behaviour, however, was more than a little conspicuous, and there were plenty of willing tongues and pens to describe it.

'Mylord's love was becoming ever more intense, and more noticeable in a small town. The time chosen for his calls was especially noticed with some criticism, as coinciding with the business or siesta times of the husband, when the wife was most at leisure.'[46]

Count Guiccioli's numerous enemies took great pleasure in the whole episode, and before long—indeed it is surprising that it should not have happened sooner—one of them sent him a most unpleasant anonymous letter. It came, Teresa tells us, on a Friday, and her husband hastened to her room to read it to her, and to show her the extremely scurrilous verses it contained—which were being sung, the letter said, even by the little boys in the streets.

Di Lord è innamorata, ognun lo sa,
La moglie del Falcon fatto Cucù,
Nè ancor s'avvede il vecchio babalà
Che ormai conviengli andar col capo in giù.
Ridono i sassi ancor della città
Del Becco e di Madonna, e molto più
Dei rimedi che Lord venir le fa
Da Venezia, da Londra e dal Perù[47]

That same evening—certainly *this* Friday was not Teresa's lucky day—some of her guests, in her own house, allowed themselves to indulge in innuendoes less coarse, but not less malicious. 'I saw him on horseback today,' said one young lady. 'Oh God, how beautiful he was! Truly the men should agree to exile him,' she added, looking pointedly at her hostess.—'Is he married?' asked her young sister, and was answered by a long account of Byron's past adventures, furnished by another guest who had recently returned from

Milan, and had heard more gossip about the poet there. 'It was not Byron's genius', adds Teresa somewhat superfluously, 'that excited public interest about him. It was his rank, his beauty, his fortune, and his mysterious reputation for strange adventures.'[48]

It was at this inauspicious moment that Byron, by a quite gratuitous piece of rudeness, got himself into trouble also with the clerical society of Ravenna. His first acquaintance there, Count Alborghetti, wrote to suggest that it would be no more than courteous for him to pay his respects to the Cardinal Legate, Malvasia—an old man of considerable distinction and learning. Byron answered civilly enough.

'I am as you know but a retired sort of being (of late years) and have been at more Mahometan than Christian Courts, besides which and though I have invariably voted in Parliament for the Catholics I am but little conversant with Cardinals. However—if—as a stranger who has been some time in Ravenna, nobody knows why—you think that I ought to pay my respects to His Eminence for whom I entertain great esteem and reverence—I will go. In that case nobody more agreeable to me personally or so proper in other respects to be my introducer as yourself. Perhaps you will do me the honour to call on me tomorrow at three—and indicate the time and manner. I could wish the *hour* to be an *Evening* one —for a Noonday presentation in the month of an Italian July in our English scarlet uniform—would be an operation of active service not necessary in time of peace to anyone but a Field Marshal.'[49]

The call, however, in spite of the hot scarlet uniform, seems to have gone well; on July 5th Byron was writing to Kinnaird that the Cardinal was 'a fine old fellow . . . [who] has been rather loose in his youth, without being much tighter in his age. He and I took very kindly to each other.'[50]

But the next stage of the acquaintance was less agreeable. The Cardinal, who greatly prided himself upon the Literary Academy, called after him the Malvasiana, which he had founded in Ravenna, decided to hold a large Conversazione,

with Byron as the guest of honour. Such an invitation, in the Papal States, was practically a Royal Command—but Byron, who was already bored with behaving properly, not only refused, but found no better pretext for doing so than that the weather was too hot for going to large parties. His refusal caused all the offence that can be imagined.

'In this very moment', wrote Alborghetti in very odd English, 'the Cardinal has called on me in order to express his amazement and angry for your refusal of coming to his Society this evening. I supposed that you should have employed the pretext of health, not that of warmth, which was too little to refuse a conversation arranged and prepared on purpose for you. It is a duty of my friendship to prevent you of all that: it will be of your prudence and politeness to do what you think the best . . . You do not want [anything] of the Cardinal, and your liberty will and can not ever be forced; but the Chief of a Province, which now you live in, deserves some regards.'[51]

To all this Byron replied in a most characteristic manner.

BYRON TO CONTE GUISEPPE ALI ORGHETTI[52]

Ravenna *July 9th,* 1819

My dear Count: I thought that I had sufficiently manifested my sincere respect for the Cardinal in paying him the first visit—and if there is any manner in which I can further testify my esteem personally, it shall be shewn.——

But I am not a man of society nor Conversazioni—it is some years that I have given up both. With regard to the attentions necessary to be paid to the 'Chief of a Province' etc.—it cannot of course be my wish nor my interest to offend him—and I presume that such offence could only be the consequence of misconduct, and that His Eminence is of a character not to disquiet himself for such trifles as the appearance or non-appearance of a foreigner at a conversation. When at Venice last winter—I twice declined the offer of an introduction to the Vice-Roy and to the Arch-duchess Maria Louisa,

made to me through the medium of the Prince of Hohenzollern and the English Consul General.

I did not find that I was supposed to have been guilty of any affront—and I am sure at least that I was far from intending it. As little do I think of displeasing His Eminence to whom I am grateful for his kindness—and for *his own proper conversation.*

I decline going into extensive society, because for these last three years I am not in the practice; indeed it distresses me—I am besides unwell, and expressed as much to you yesterday; if His Eminence thinks for a moment he must be aware that I can have no design to slight or to offend him—but the contrary.

I trust that you will do me the favour to represent as much to His Eminence and to believe me ever very truly yours obliged and obed.t Ser.t- -P[ai]r d'A[ngleterre] BYRON

To Count Alborghetti

etc. etc. etc.

P.S. I did *not* know that the Conversation was *made for me* —and I *did* say that I was *unwell in health* both to you and afterwards to the Count Zinanni.

As to this reply—for of course the whole story was at once written off to Rangone by one of his Ravenna correspondents —Rangone commented that it was written 'in a manner very clear and somewhat disobliging'. Byron remained at home with Teresa, and 'the Cardinal's Conversazione took place without Mylord'.*

It was, perhaps, natural that Byron should have been disinclined for parties that week, for the Cardinal's invitation coincided with the arrival of several distressing letters. The first of these was to Teresa from her young brother Pietro, who was completing his studies in Rome and who, having heard some of the gossip about Byron from literary friends, at once believed every word of it.

* RANGONE, op. cit. His correspondent was Conte della Torre, a nobleman of Ravenna.

CONTE PIETRO GAMBA TO
CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

So it is true, my dearest sister, that a young English Lord and Poet called Byron has made his way into your house. What I hear about him, in the aristocratic and literary society of Rome which I frequent, fills me with apprehension about the consequences that this relationship may have for you. You are so young—your experience of life is so limited—and his personal attractions are, so everyone says, so superior to those of most men, that I tremble for your peace. Your heart is pure—your soul is noble—and with the poetic ideas of your intellectual education you may well see in him a Petrarch, and in yourself a Laura.

I feel as if I could see into your heart, my dear little sister, but as your brother I wish also to be your protector, and to show you the rocks which surround your enchanted palace. Well, you must know that this man, whom you described to me in your last letter as an angel upon Earth, is the husband of a young woman full of innocence and affection like yourself; and, not satisfied with having abandoned her to give himself up to a life of disorder, he keeps her shut up in a Castle, of which many dark mysterious tales are told. It is even said that, in spite of his rank, he has been a Pirate during his journeys in the East. .

It seems to me, therefore, my dear Sister, that before forming an intimate tie with a man so strange, and of so doubtful a reputation, you should reflect a great deal—and that is what I beg you to do—and what is particularly incumbent upon you, owing to your social position and your beauty.[58]

This was—so Teresa tells us, and we can well believe it—a most upsetting letter. She could not bear to think 'that there was anyone in the world, and especially her brother, who could harbour such thoughts about her noble friend'. 'It would have been easy for her', she remarks, 'to ask Byron what was the truth of the matter, but she felt that it would be an insult.' Moved only by 'the instincts of a child who

knows by whom it is loved or not', she concealed her brother's letter, and sent him an immediate and eloquent answer.

After a preamble in which she stated that she owed her recovery of her health, after God, to Byron, who had arrived in Ravenna when she was dying, 'like an angel sent from Heaven to save me', she passed on to a complete avowal of her feelings:

'Why should I not love such a friend? The feelings I have vowed to him are stronger than all arguments, and, in loving Lord Byron as I love him, I do not think that I am offending the holy laws of God. You ask me to give up this friendship; but why? Is it because of the Count? But it is by his wish that Byron is here. Is it because of what the World will say? But this World, whose acquaintance I have scarcely made, I have I think, already appraised; I have realized its vanity, its injustice, and its incapacity to fill a Heart and Soul that has any other frivolous and vulgar needs. Is it for fear that the World may find a chance of exercising its malice? But it seems to me, from the little I have seen of it, that it does not need any behaviour to do so. And what would the world give me in return, to make up for the sacrifice that I should make —of this friend's hand that protects me—of his high intelligence—of his great soul which will be the illumination of my life to show me the right road? Are you asking this in the name of my peace, of my happiness? But where should I henceforth find happiness without him? It seems to me that if I never saw him again, there would be no Sun left in the sky for me. . . .

As for the Gossip spread about him by his enemies in Rome, I beg you to consider it only as a fable. To keep a young and innocent spouse shut up in a Castle, as in the days of Dante and Pia de' Tolomei—is that possible in our time? And where? In England, the land of Law and Liberty?'

Such calumnies, she added, were destroyed by their own absurdity. Yet even if they came down to the simple accusation that Lord Byron had been unkind to his wife, 'Well, I do not believe it. I have had constant proofs of the extreme

goodness of his Heart! Tears of mental or physical suffering make him almost ill—the dread of treading on an ant makes him go out of his way—a scene at the play, a sad story or a melodious tune bring tears to his eyes.'

Like many another woman before her, Teresa confused sensibility with kindness. But at the end she added: 'As to the causes of his separation, I will learn them and tell you what they were. You must tell me in exchange the names of your reporters, and so we shall mutually illuminate each other.'*

But hardly had Teresa sent off her answer to her brother, than a much more disruptive letter than Pietro's arrived. This one—which also arrived upon a Friday—came from Venice. It was written to Byron by Hoppner who, from the first, had realized that Byron's affair with Teresa was likely to be more serious than his other Venetian episodes, and had looked upon it with a proportionate jealousy and disapproval. For Hoppner, like so many of Byron's friends, considered himself privileged to play the part of Mentor: and he was encouraged in his censoriousness by his narrow-minded, sanctimonious Swiss wife—a lady of whom, to judge by the consistent politeness of his behaviour to her, Byron was more than a little afraid. It was to her unloving but supposedly maternal care that poor little Allegra was, for a time, entrusted; and it was her report of the calumnies of a dismissed maid that, in the following year, started the abominable story about Shelley and Claire which Byron had the weakness either to believe, or to pretend that he believed.

But on this occasion her influence was hardly needed—for, from the day of Byron's arrival in Ravenna, a steady stream of letters from both Hoppner and Alexander Scott had followed him, attempting with every device to bring him back to Venice. Both Hoppner and Scott, it is clear, were con-

* 'Vie', pp. 277-83. It should perhaps once again be emphasized that all letters by herself or others quoted by Teresa, of which we have not got the original, should be taken with some caution, as they are likely to have been touched up.

sumed with jealousy—and both knew that Byron's most vulnerable point was his vanity. He would be capable of almost any disloyalty, rather than let his friends believe that he was seriously involved.

At first, however, Hoppner—uncertain of Byron's state of mind, and still expecting him to return soon to Venice—confined himself to dark, mysterious hints.

'It is a thousand pities, for your sake as well as my own,' he wrote, six days after Byron's arrival in Ravenna, 'that I dare not always speak to you as I think, but, if I tell you something for your own advantage, which immediately concerns another person, you directly acquaint that third person whence you received the information, then what was intended for your good alone, becomes a means of making me hated by others As you take any delight in saying ill-natured things, you will not be surprised at the above remark, however puzzled you may be to guess at its meaning. And puzzled you must remain, and to your own cost.'[54]

Byron's only reply was to send for his horses and carriage, and Hoppner's hints became broader.

'I am glad you amuse yourself so well, but would have you take care of the stiletto. A blow in the dark costs but little to people who are accustomed to make their passions stifle any appeal their conscience might foolishly attempt to make to them.'[55]

This letter, however, crossed one from Byron which firmly stated: 'I can fix no time for my return to Venice—it may be soon or late—it all depends on the *Dama*—'[56] and within the same week he was sending, in the greatest urgency and distress, for Dr. Aglietti To this request Scott replied, with some decency: 'With the suspense of illness, I will not venture to write other nonsense that I had in store for you.'[57] But Hoppner was restrained by no such fine feelings. Of Aglietti he could only say that he was doubtless impelled by 'two very powerful motives, the hope of getting a short respite from his official fatigues, and at the same time of earning a little money to exert his best rhetorical powers'. And as to Teresa—'It is certainly very hard upon you, having gone to

Ravenna for corporeal purposes alone, to have so cruel an attack made on your sensibility.'[58]

But then Byron wrote to Scott. The G. is better and will get well with prudence. Our amatory business goes on *well* and daily.[59] Hoppner could bear it no longer, it was clear that Byron was becoming hopelessly involved and that it was his duty to save him He accordingly sent off—on July 9th—the following singularly unpleasant letter, in which, after a few sentences about the accounts of the lease of Palazzo Mocenigo—he came straight to the point.

'I am very sorry for the distress you feel on the G.'s account, not only because I think in almost every such case they are good feelings thrown away on an unworthy object, but because I have reason to think it is particularly so in the present instance. Human nature is such that our greatest pleasures are derived from, and depend upon illusion, and it is therefore the more cruel in anyone who attempts to destroy those which make another happy though but for a moment: but I really cannot with patience see you throwing yourself away upon such people. While it is merely for your amusement, and thus the impression was only to be momentary, I should never interfere with your pleasures: but to hear you talking of a serious attachment to a woman, who under her circumstances would be unworthy of it, if it were only for her breach of duty in admitting it, and who in the present instance is reported avowedly not to return it, but to have entangled you in her nets merely from vanity, is what the friendship you have honoured me with does not allow me to witness without a remonstrance

Perhaps you will think I am taking an unwarrantable liberty with you. It is your own fault, you have had repeated proofs of the frankness of my disposition, and since notwithstanding the disagreeable things I have before said to you, you have still tolerated me, you have given me a kind of right to speak my thoughts freely to you. Were it not so, it is the duty of every man to endeavour to aid another in distress; and I see you overwhelmed in a passion which is in every way unworthy of you, and for one who, when she thinks

herself sure of you, will leave you in the lurch, and make a boast of having betrayed you. It may be that considering her present illness I ought not to say these hard things of the lady. But this is the last opportunity I shall have to write to you for some time. Should her disorder prove fatal, what I have said will appear not only particularly offensive, but ridiculous, as there will be no time to prove the truth of it: if she recovers, which I am sure I hope she may do, you will have leisure and opportunity to discover that if I am not right in my opinion of the fair G., I have been greatly deceived by what is here said about her.'[60]

It is hardly possible to imagine a letter more profoundly galling and disturbing to a man of Byron's character. All his weakest points—his vanity, his pride, his fear of ridicule—were simultaneously attacked. It is, indeed, surprising—and an indication that his tie with Teresa was stronger than he liked to admit—that this letter did not bring about an immediate breach with her. But it did leave an aftermath of doubt, suspiciousness and wounded vanity which damaged their relationship for a considerable time and which manifested themselves only too clearly in the reply he sent off, not to Hoppner himself, but to Scott. This letter, indeed, is a completely characteristic document of Byron at his most caddish: the mask of bravado imperfectly concealing the deep inner disquiet and fear of ridicule. What the letter, however, does *not* show, is indifference towards Teresa.

BYRON TO ALEXANDER SCOTT[61]

July 12th, 1819

My dear Scott: I enclose you Hoppner s last letter—you will understand *why* on reading it through. All his amiable bile is *gratis*—and *unasked*—now I *ask you* and whatever you say on the subject disagreeable will not be your fault but mine.—I never supposed that the G. was to be a despairing shepherdess—nor did I search very nicely into her motives—all I know is that *she* sought me—and that I have *had her—there and here and everywhere*—so that if there is any fool-making on

the occasion I humbly suspect that *two* can play at that—and that hitherto the parties have at least an equal chance.—I have no hesitation in repeating that I *love* her—but I have also *self-love* enough to be cured by the least change or trick on her part when I know it. Pride is one's best friend on such occasions. As to her '*vanity*' (I wish it may—there is no passion so strong) in getting me as Hoppner says—*that* might be very well in an English woman—but I don't see how *English* poetical celebrity—or rank; is to operate upon an *Italian*—besides which I have no paramount character to go upon personally—at least in Italy—if he had said '*interest*' I should have thought him nearer the mark—though I have *no right hitherto* to assert even that. As you are much more in the way of hearing the *real truth or lie* than H. perhaps you will tell me to what Gossip he alludes—at any rate you will tell it without *mystery* and *hints* and without *bile*—so pray do—I forgive whatever may be unpleasant in the intelligence and it may be of use to me.

Pray answer by return of *Post*—lest I should be off again. I suppose this may possibly be some *cookery* between H. and Minghaldo—if it should not—*you* are fifty times more likely to know than he is—what does he mean by '*avowedly*'—does he suppose a woman is to go and '*avow*' her likings in the Piazza?

I should think her public *disavowal* the strongest proof—at least it is thought so in most women—what think you?

She is getting well very fast—all the rest as usual—and I very truly yours. BYRON

P.S. Comp[liment]s to Missiaglia.*

P.S. What does H. mean by '*when she is sure of me*'? *how* '*sure*'? When a man has been for some time in the habit of . . . a female—methinks it is his own fault if the being 'left in the lurch' greatly incommodes him [.] and unless he is a sighing swain—the accounts at parting are at least equal—if the lady takes another caprice.—Ebbene? Can't we

* Giovan Battista Missiaglia was the proprietor of the Apollo Library and the principal publisher and bookseller in Venice.

match her in that too think you? And then let her boast of her 'betraying' . . . So corroborate or contradict that Consular Diogenes.

You should give me notice in time, that I may be the first to throw up the Cards.

There has been no public exhibition for I never go out with her—except twice or thrice in the Carriage—but I am *not in waiting*.

Give me but a proof of a good *tight suspicious confirmation* and I will rejoin you directly, and—we will village at the Mira—there is a bribe for you.

Of course I was perfectly aware that there would be a grand Benzonian Controversy—and much evil said and thought on the occasion—but all this was not in Hoppner's precise department so that I am '*rimasta*'!!! remember *you* and *I* can say and hear anything from one another—it is in *our line*—but I never gave him the right of *hinting* and *teazing* me out of temper.

You will think me a damned fool—but when she was supposed in danger—I was really and truly on the point of poisoning myself—and I have got the drug still in my drawer. If Hoppner is *not* gone ask him in a friendly way from *me* what he means—but *don't* show him this letter.

Dear Scott: I have forgotten one thing which will make you laugh. The *G's* brother wrote from Rome to their father here (I saw the letter) a long dissuasion against any 'relazione' with me—because (principally) I had for *molti anni incarcerato*—confined my wife in '*un suo castello*' in England of mine out of revenge!!! Tell this to Hoppner it is a good set-off to his letter. I suspect Mengaldo and Rizzo* in Hoppner's diatribe—but be that as it may—I will never forgive H. for his gratuitous—bilious—officious intermeddling.—He might at least have waited till asked.

I translated the enclosed to her *today* (the 12th) you may imagine her answer—of course she would be at no loss for

* Conte Francesco Rizzo-Patarol was a well-known Venetian gossip.

that none of them are. She volunteered an elopement, saying, 'then instead of being at my mercy—I shall be at yours—for you have my letters in which I have not only exposed my feelings but my name—you have every proof that a man can have of my having been in earnest—and if you desire more—try me. Besides—what do they *know* of me at Venice?—you should judge by what they say of me here—if you like hearsay better than experience.'

All this you may say to Hoppner: from me—with my sentiments on his conduct into the bargain;—he is really intolerable.

The reference in the last postscript tells us that Teresa had by now shown Pietro's letter to Byron. It would be interesting to know whether she also showed him her reply—so much more loyal than his own.

Scott appears to have answered Byron immediately, and to have disclaimed any share in Hoppner's accusations—but unfortunately to have added that Teresa was thought 'ridiculous' in Venice—a remark more calculated to damp Byron's feelings for her than the most serious calumnies. He did, indeed, refrain from showing that particular passage to Teresa.

'If I had told her that she was called and thought an absurd woman (which I carefully avoided) *there* indeed I should have been truly Hoppnerian.—You may tell a man that he is thought libertine—profligate—a villain—but not that his nose wants blowing or that his neck-cloth is ill tied. Suppose you were to say to that coxcomb Mengaldo that he was dangerous—disaffected—a severe disciplinarian in his regiment—that he had ill-used Carlotta Aglietti*—that he had been guilty of atrocities in his retreat from Moscow . . . he would affect to feel nothing—but if you told him his father sold eggs not very fresh—he would be wrath to a degree. I do not know whether I make myself understood—but it is in the little nooks of Character—where your two tormentors

* Carlotta Aglietti was the daughter of Professor Aglietti, whom Mengaldo had wished to marry.

play the Mosquito and the Gadfly—and where such fellows as M[engaldo] and H[oppner] distil their little drop of venom.—Now I do maintain that I have always avoided this.'[62]

His consideration for Teresa's feelings, however, did not go so far as to prevent him from telling her of Hoppner's other charges against her—and these distressed her so much that she insisted on at once writing to Scott herself.

Byron forwarded her letter with the comment:

'You will judge for yourself—knowing the people—I make no more pretensions to any kind of judgment satisfied that I am a damned fool . . . The letter was written at the other end of the room, with several persons talking all at once—so that you may make some allowance for the difficulties of the situation, to say nothing of that of the Subject.'[63]

After all this, Teresa's own letter is unexpectedly brief, dignified and sincere; only the writing shows the depths of her distress.

CONTESSA GUICCIOLI TO ALEXANDER SCOTT

Mylord:* Byron has read me some parts of your last letter, which concerns me. What feelings it has awakened in me, you can easily imagine; but it is certain that not the least of them has been my sense of how great my obligation is towards you, and how great should be my Esteem. And therefore I do not blush or fear to take the liberty of sending you these lines, indeed I feel it to be my duty. To your great kindness I hope you will add yet another favour, and it is this: to give counsels of patience to those who are condemning me for future errors.

My life, Mylord, is, I may say, only a few months old; I am certain that no action of mine, either for good or bad, can strengthen my accusers and put them in the right; I therefore am astonished at the *sublime acuteness* of those people who

* 'She has Mylorded you,' commented Byron, 'taking that for granted.'

can see, foresee and judge the future.—But I hope to receive my justification from another judge: Time. If you could see, Mylord, with how much firmness I am saying this word and with how much longing I am invoking that Time! But you know your friend well, you can, at least in part, imagine it. What a wretch I should consider myself if I feared that, one day, so great a man would blush to have loved me! But I am as sure of myself as I am of seeing the Sun again tomorrow.

I will not trouble you any more, Mylord. Forgive the liberty that I have taken, understand me, continue your courteous offices, and say that my crime is *one only, and always will be one.*

I thank you, Mylord, and wish you every happiness, which you well deserve.

Your most obedient and affectionate servant.[64]

In the 'Vie' Teresa makes no reference to this correspondence. She merely reports that Hoppner wrote a long letter to Byron, 'repeating the thousand slanders which Byron's stay in Ravenna had awakened in Venice. Byron was irritated and made no reply'.[65] Four months later, however, Byron did write to Hoppner, telling him that his letter 'displeased me very much:—not that it might not be true in its statement and kind in its intention, but you have lived long enough to know how useless all such representations ever are, and must be, in cases where the passions are concerned . . . Upon that subject we will (if you like) be silent. You might only say what would distress me without answering any purpose whatever.'[66]

To this Hoppner replied with a lame apology though not a retraction:

'It grieves me heartily that my last letter made so sore an impression on you. I had no intention to give you pain . . . However I will now say no more, lest in blundering out an excuse I chance to make what is already bad worse.'[67]

Hoppner's resentment, however, was never placated. Thirty-five years after Byron's death, in 1869, he was writing:

'I regret to learn that Madame Guiccioli has made so free with my name and opinions respecting Lord Byron. I hope she does not also say I enjoyed the advantage of her acquaintance in Venice, for although I cannot absolutely say I never saw her, I can safely assert the next thing to it . . . On one of those occasions [a call of Hoppner's on Byron] while he was at his breakfast, a female crossed the room, entering it on one side and leaving it at the opposite door, in whose appearance there was nothing to attract attention, and I actually took her for one of the maids of the house, learning only from him when she had passed that it was Madame Guiccioli. . . .'*

To Scott Byron had said that 'Hoppner was really intolerable'. But, for all that, he could not dismiss the incident from his mind. All his letters at this time show how deeply it rankled—not, indeed, from any real doubt of Teresa but merely from the festering dread of appearing ridiculous.

For this, he believed, there was only one remedy—and within a fortnight of Hoppner's letter he was telling Scott that he had other diversions in view.

'I have something besides her [Teresa] on my hands and in my eye . . . There are better things in that line—in this part of the world than at Venice—besides—like the preserve of a Manor—this part has not yet been shot over.'[68]

The reference is to Geltrude Vicari, Teresa's 'confidante

* 'I certainly did not approve', he sanctimoniously added, 'the life Lord Byron led in Venice. In a previous letter I have said he led a foolish disreputable life: on which account I well remember to have told him that he made himself ridiculous in the eyes of everyone. I have little doubt it was his disgust with the very life he was leading which made him take a dislike to Venice, and glad of the opportunity the connection he at this time formed with Madame Guiccioli offered him to quit it altogether. It was pretty evident to me that he at first cared little for her, however much his vanity may have been flattered at seeing the impression he had made on a young lady of rank in society so different from the other women he had known since his arrival in Venice; and it depended on the toss-up of a halfpenny whether he would follow her to Ravenna or return to England.' *The Athenaeum*, May 22nd, 1869.

"in white linen", a very pretty woman, noble also as her friend', about whom he had already written to Kinnaird. 'La Geltrude is gone to Bologna; after pinching her left thigh one evening I was never permitted to set eyes on her *not no more*.'[69] The affair seems to have been of no importance and to have been entered into merely to show off to his friends. 'There are as good fish in the sea . . .' This is, of all the aspects of Byron's character, the most unpleasant—and there is nothing to be gained by dwelling on it.

'I doubt', he added to Kinnaird about Teresa, 'her liking anything for long, except one thing, and I presume she will soon arrive at varying even that, in which case I should be at liberty to repass the Po, and perhaps the Alps, but as yet I can say nothing.'[70]

Yet, even while he was writing these letters, he was already determined to settle in Ravenna, by Teresa's side, for good—and by the end of the month he found himself obliged to communicate the news to his Venetian Mentors, so as to give them the necessary instructions about his horses and his numerous houses: the Palazzo Mocenigo, the 'Casino' at S. Maria Zobenigo and the Villa Foscarini at La Mira. 'I have taken my part, which is *not* to return to Venice.' But hastily he added: 'The G.s have no influence in this, for *they do* return in Winter—to pass some time.' And at the end of the letter, after sending greetings to his Venetian acquaintances: 'You need make no secret of my intended removal; but at the same time you may state the fact—which is—that the G.s have nothing to do with it.'[71] Can he really have expected to be believed?

Scott, who for a long time had been expecting this decision, and had not answered Byron's previous letters, now replied by return of post:

'Your letter, so far from making me laugh, has made me sad. It has all the melancholy tinge of a last will and testament where one is not named. Give up your houses! Discharge your servants! Oibò! I will wait for your second thoughts . . . In one of your letters to H[oppner] you say

that you were disposed to think well of the Venetians till they forced you to the contrary. How can that be? What have they done? I am in the dark and love the light. I know that the V[enetians] are idle, ignorant and vicious,—so am I, but that is no reason for incurring dislike . . . For my part I can assure you that I never heard the Venetians talk of your life but with respect, and when they ask after you, 'tis with the same sort of solicitude as if they were asking after one of their own, whom they wished to return.'[72]

Contessa Benzoni's letters to Byron at this time, indeed, show an affectionate and spontaneous warmth which confirms Scott's assurances.

CONTESSA MARINA QUERINI-BENZONI TO BYRON[73]

You have forgotten all your friends in Venice [the first letter begins, without any preamble].—This is a fault towards the others, but towards Marina and Beppe, to whom you are so dear, it is almost a crime. I am seeing very little of Scott, too: Madame Dempsen, the mother of Beppe Dempsen, took him away from me, she takes him to play chess at a café. So Marina has lost her two beloved Englishmen. Write me a line about yourself, tell me if you are happy and how you are faring. I have been told that Contessa Guiccioli is not well; I am sorry; pray greet her for me. I should have liked to see your little girl, but don't dare to look for her, where she is staying. In short I have nothing by me to remind me of you but my constant friendship, which will never be altered. Many greetings from Beppe, and pray write and command me anything for your affairs here, for Beppe and I will see to it gladly. Farewell. Farewell.

Her second letter, too, strikes a most agreeable note, after Hoppner's and Scott's acidity.

My friend: I hear that you are in a place where you are *having some* trouble. If I did not think it would make some-

one sad, I would tell you to come back to us. I know that in Ravenna, too, you are much loved and respected: so it should be; I have been told too a great deal about the generosity of your heart. I was not surprised, but took a great pleasure in it. You are great not only in your head but in your heart. In the head there are some singularities, which are hardly ever lacking in those who possess sublime talents—but that heart of yours is perfect. All the Englishmen who come here ask me at once about Lord Byron, which Mylord doesn't care a pin about, and they know it. A great many have gone through, in this summer season, but they do not stay long. Our Hoppners are in Switzerland; now that I know them better I like them very much, all the more because they are very fond of you.

All the Venetians are off to the country. I cannot tell you any anecdote, for I do not think there is a city more silent than this one, *à quelques bavardages près*, for Venice has a fault which it had not in its natural state, *Gossip*. Madame Albrizzi has gone to Florence to get reprinted her eulogies of Canova, who will soon be in Venice and who has given me two excellent busts, in gesso, of Laura and Tasso's Eleonora.

I am glad that your dear child is in such hands, *give her a kiss* [this is written in Venetian dialect]. Here is some Venetian which is so dear to you. Pray thank Countess Guiccioli for her message, and greet her for me. At the beginning of August I shall go to the country for a few days. If you have any commands, if I can do anything for you, go on writing to Venice. Count Rangone who speaks of you always as if you were his spoilt child, clasps your hand and is very, very fond of you.

Good day, good day. I am always your

MARINA QUERINI BENZONI[74]

Meanwhile at Ravenna life went on as before—until a fresh blow fell upon the two lovers. Count Guiccioli, whether in consequence of all the gossip, or because he genuinely had business on his estates near Bologna, suddenly decided to go

there—and, since his wife was now fully recovered, saw no reason why she should not go with him.

Before the following two notes were written, the date of departure had already been decided, and the lovers had settled to meet again in Bologna.

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI[75]

Ravenna *August 4th*, 1819

My treasure: Remember your portrait and my heart.—Farewell. What a moment! Farewell! BYRON

Ravenna *August 4th*, 1819

My Treasure: Your reproaches are unjust;—Alessandro and your father being present—and I not being able then to clasp you to my heart—I kissed your hand and hurried away, so as not to show my suffering, which would only too clearly have revealed the whole, whole truth! I vow that I love you a thousand times more than when I knew you in V[enice]. You know it—you feel it. *Think*, my love, of *those* moments—delicious—dangerous—but—*happy*, in every sense—not only for the pleasure, more than ecstatic, that you gave me, but for the danger (to which you were exposed) that we fortunately escaped. The hall! Those rooms! The open doors! The servants so curious and so near—Ferdinando—the visitors! how many obstacles! But all overcome—it has been the real triumph of Love—a hundred times Victor.*

Farewell—my only Treasure—my one Hope. Farewell—I kiss you untiringly from my heart—and am ever yours.

P.S. Send me the note about *Dante's tomb* with your name in it. I saw it on your little table the day before yesterday,—Love me as I love you.

The address will be as we agreed—in case I arrive in B[ologna] on the day suggested.

* Byron referred to these same risks in a letter to Hoppner on June 20th. 'The local is inconvenient (no *bolts* and be d—d to them) and we run great risks (were it not at sleeping hours after dinner) and no place but the great saloon at his own palace.' Unpublished passage. The rest of the letter is in *L.J.*, IV, p. 318.

What does a.a.a. mean in your very dear booklet?

Do not forget to send someone to Imsom* to tell him to hand over my letters only to someone sent by you.

I have just received yours. I swear I will kiss nothing but *that* remembrance of you until I see you again. Farewell!

Before going to Bologna, however, Count Guiccioli and his wife visited their estates near Forlì—and from here the Count 'who' according to Teresa, 'had a great deal of wit and was flattered by the friendly manners of Lord Byron', sent Byron an invitation. His writing—of which we possess only this example—is as rigid and cramped as the descriptions of his bearing, and the letter consists merely of two formal sentences, acknowledging Byron's 'delightful letter', and asking him to 'come and see this poetic place of ours'. This, according to Teresa, was 'a great and noble residence, that had been an abbey and had been transformed by him [Guiccioli] into a fine summer residence'. Teresa herself was so charmed by it that, desiring extremely to show it to Lord Byron, she added to the Count's letter a second pressing note in her most romantic vein.

'Come, Mylord: pray do not fear that noise or callers may disturb you—here all is nature and tranquillity. One hears no sound but that of the wind shaking the leaves of the trees, and the sweet song of birds. On Sunday morning we shall leave for Bologna, and tomorrow we shall make an excursion to Faenza, returning to Forlì at eight in the evening. So we could spend the evening together, walking in the garden, where we need not fear, as at Ravenna, the bad effects of the evening dew.'[76]

To both these invitations Byron answered with a refusal.

BYRON TO CONTE ALESSANDRO GUICCIOLI[77]

Ravenna *August 7th*, 1819

My dear Chevalier: I write my answer in English to the letter, which I had the honour of receiving from you and

* Cristoforo Insom (not Imsom) was Byron's banker in Bologna.

your consort, for fear of 'spropositi' in Italian. I am very sorry that it will not be in my power to be at Forlì tomorrow evening, as I must wait for the post of Domenica; but on Lunedi I intend to set out for Bologna, where I shall try to discover your Palazzo Savioli. My auberge will be the Pellegrino. I make no apology for troubling you in English, which you understand better than I can write in Italian, and even if you do not, I would rather be unintelligible in my own tongue than in yours. . . .

My time has passed in a melancholy manner since your departure. Ferdinando and I have been riding as usual, and he told me a sad story of Madam's losses—*un anello, una catena e dei quattrini* . . . I regretted to hear that you had *sospetti* of *Ferd.* about the scudi which disappeared: surely he would be the last person to be guilty of such a thing.

I desire my best respects to the Contessa your gentle Consort and with many thanks for your kind invitation and in the hopes of seeing you in Bologna in a few days, believe me to be very gratefully and affectionately yours. BYRON

The lost ring to which Byron referred and about which, in his next letter, he reproached Teresa, had a very odd history. 'You ask me', wrote Rangone's diligent correspondent, Conte della Torre, 'for more anecdotes about Lord Byron,'—and proceeded to tell him that Teresa's 'anglico amante' had presented her, on the very evening of the Cardinal's Conversazione, with a valuable ring. But now a problem arose: how could she wear it in her husband's presence? Once again the help of the obliging Abate Perelli was required. He had the ring valued and brought it to Count Guiccioli, offering it to him at only one third of its value,—in order, he said, to save from ruin a poor family, whose last treasure it was. The Count hesitated; Teresa pretended to be reluctant to spend so large a sum; the priest reproved her for lack of charity; the Count, ever unable to resist a good bargain, joined forces with him—and finally bought for his wife, for one hundred scudi, a ring which, he was told, had been valued at three hundred and fifty.

And then Teresa lost it, and did not dare to tell Byron! And the whole story—which, of course, everyone in Ravenna knew except the Count—was sent off to Rangone, and carefully set down in his *Cronaca*—to be confirmed for us, after 130 years, by Byron's letters.

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

Ravenna *August 7th*, 1819

My Treasure: I have written an answer in English to A[lessandro]. I am extremely sorry not to see you again in Forlì, but very soon (on Monday or Tuesday) I hope to arrive in Bologna. I am writing in some anxiety as to the fate of this letter—for I must trust it to my Courier. I hope however that Fortune will not forsake two lovers at such a point.

So you have lost the *ring*—without saying a single word to me! This is a lack of trust which surprises and hurts me, who have never made any mysteries with *you*. I cannot say more now. I love you + + + + + + + * Do you understand me? For us there can be few crosses holier than these.

You cannot imagine how much our separation is distressing me. I long to see you again, but I tremble, believing myself always about to lose you—and I feel anxious—for that head of yours is an enigma—and *you have no heart*. I can see you reading these last words—'*Oh Fury!*' as the tyrant says in our comic plays. Alas! *no longer comic* since your departure. The theatre has become a desert—I dare not look at your box. Don't think that I am saying seriously that you have no heart. You have one—for dress? *This* was only an English compliment; an ultramontane joke. *It is my revenge*—not for the *loss of the ring*, but for showing me little trust, in keeping silence about it.

Farewell, my dearest *Evil*—farewell, my torment—farewell, my *all* (but *not all mine!*) I kiss you more often than I have ever kissed you—and this (if Memory does not deceive me) should be a fine number of times, counting from the beginning. Meanwhile,—you can be sure of me—of my love—

* These crosses are the same symbols that Byron and Augusta used in writing to each other. *Cf. Astarte*, p. 58 and passim.

and of your power. 'I pray for peace.'[78] Love me—not as I love you—that would be too much for your kind heart—but as you love your *Elmò*.* Farewell. I kiss you 1000000 times with my whole heart, insatiably.

Three days later, on August 10th, the lovers met again in Bologna.

*Elmò was Teresa's dog.

3 : BOLOGNA—LA MIRA—VENICE

All this comes of reading Corinne. BYRON

'I write in haste', wrote Byron to Murray on August 9th, 'tomorrow I set off for Bologna—I write to you with thunder, lightning, etc., and all the winds of heaven whistling through my hair, and the racket of preparation to boot. My "Mistress dear" who hath "fed my heart upon smiles and wine" for the last two months, set off with her husband for Bologna this morning, and it seems that I follow him at three tomorrow morning.'[1] The next day Byron was in Bologna.

On his arrival he first went to live in the *Locanda del Pellegrino,* where he had stayed in June, and after a few days he took some rooms in an eighteenth-century palazzo in Via Galliera, quite close to Palazzo Savioli, where the Guicciolis lived. Byron's apartment, which consisted of only three or four rooms, decorated in the Empire style, looked out into a small garden, and some furniture was soon provided for it by Teresa's servants.[2] He never, however, actually lived there, since Guiccioli soon put at his disposal some rooms on the ground floor of the Palazzo Savioli, into which he moved, using the Palazzo Merendoni only as a lodging for his servants and a place to entertain his Bolognese acquaintances.

In Bologna, as in every other town he visited, Byron's daily life was observed by the police with an anxious and unceasing assiduity. In the concerto of his life in Italy, their activities resemble the part of the 'basso obbligato'—ceaselessly reiterating, however many variations the main theme may offer, its monotonous and persistent accompaniment. The archives of Venice and Bologna, of Ravenna, Florence, Pisa and Lucca, and above all of the Vatican, still contain the fruits of their researches: long, dull, often half-illiterate reports, which note the most trivial and insignificant details about the dangerous British Lord. For the Governments of

Austria, of the Papal States and of Tuscany were all agreed in this: Byron was not merely a dissolute nobleman, a dilettante traveller; he was a dangerous freethinker, an emissary of Liberalism, to be kept under constant supervision. And so, wherever he went, a trail of obscure and painstaking spies followed in his wake—opening his letters, talking to his servants, watching outside his doors, noting the names of his visitors and the times at which he got up and went to bed, and interpreting these facts as best they could for the benefit of their respective Governments. For all these spies, poor fellows, were greatly handicapped: they were so much in awe of the great Lord, that they did not dare to approach him!

'I do not conceal from Your Excellency', said a report to the Director General of Police in Rome, 'that this news [of Byron's arrival] both perplexes and embarrasses me. Byron is a man of letters, and his literary merits will attract to him the most distinguished men of learning in Bologna. This class of men has no love for the Government. Your Excellency sees, therefore, how difficult it becomes for me to exercise the necessary supervision over Mylord's private affairs.'[3]

It is, indisputably, very difficult to spy upon a man effectively under these circumstances. But in Bologna, as subsequently in Ravenna and Pisa—the Government's emissaries did their best. The most formidable of them was the Tuscan spy Giuseppe Valtancoli of Montepulciano, who was playing a double part: on the one hand, on behalf of Austria, he was to foment a rebellion in the Romagna, so as to provide a pretext for an Austrian armed intervention, and thus pave the way for the annexation of the Romagna; while at the same time he was persuading the Liberals that they would receive help from their Tuscan sympathizers, provided they consented to being annexed to the Grand Duchy. In these transactions Guiccioli—on his usual principle of keeping on good terms with both sides—seems to have taken part.[4] Valtancoli was greatly assisted by his position as an ex-Freemason, since he had once been a member of the Masonic Lodge of

Pisa, and had then obtained possession of secret papers and emblems belonging to the Lodge.[5]

The question of the connection between the Freemasons and the Carboneria is an exceedingly complicated one.[6] As early as 1813, information was sent to Eugène de Beauharnais, the Grand Master of the Milanese Freemasons, about a 'semi-masonic' *corporazione de' Carbonari,* which in Naples alone already numbered 40,000 members, all of the lower classes, 'whose object is nothing less than the overthrow of the monarchic governments in Italy, in order to replace them by republics'.[7] Within the next few years the movement spread all over the country, especially in the south, where many adherents were attracted, as they had been to Freemasonry, by the complex symbolism and mysteries of the new society. Their romantic titles and complicated degrees of hierarchy, their secret rites and passwords and dark, terrifying penalties, held the appeal of the secret, the occult, to which, in the Carboneria, was added a more explicitly Christian element. Its members worshipped Jesus Christ,—'our Redeemer and our Model', as they called him in their oath of allegiance,—and they believed in a revival of Christian brotherhood. Their patron saint was St. Theobald of Brie—who, in the eleventh century, gave up his country, his high rank and his fortune to live as a charcoal-burner in the forests of Swabia. The world, in the symbolism of the Carboneria, was a Forest, and 'to rid the forest of its wolves' was to free the world from its tyrants. All the members of the order, in whatever country they lived, were 'Good Cousins', and met in lodges called 'Vendite'; all those who did not belong to the order were called 'Pagans'.

The solemn oath taken at his initiation by a new member—'a Pagan wandering in the Forest'—included a promise to maintain complete secrecy in all matters pertaining to the Society, to 'come to the aid of all Good Cousins in their need, and to respect the honour of their families'. And it ended with the words: 'If I break my oath, let my body be torn to pieces and burned and my ashes scattered to the winds, so that my name may be a lesson to other Good

Cousins, all over the earth.'[8] The member who betrayed the Order's secrets was subject to the most severe penalties: his name was inscribed, 'for general execration', in the Black Book of the Order; he was boycotted by every other member and deprived of 'fire and water', and his name, or a little effigy of his person, was burned in the presence of the assembled members—while in some cases (since it was declared to be no crime to take away the life of a traitor) he was condemned to be killed by another member of the Order chosen by lot. Moreover penalties hardly less severe were inflicted on the Good Cousins who transgressed against the austere rules of life of the Order—the punishable crimes including conjugal infidelity, drunkenness and gambling.[9]

In 1818 a Congress of the Carboneria was held in the Palazzo Hercolani in Bologna, at which the *Costituzione Latina* was approved. This Constitution regulated the position and duties of all the branches of the Movement in Italy, whose members took a solemn oath of 'eternal hatred against all monarchies', and swore to 'give all their strength and even their lives to achieve the independence of Italy'.[10] Bologna thus became the centre of the subversive activities of Northern Italy, and when Byron, already doubly suspected as an Englishman and a Liberal, arrived there, it was perhaps not unnatural that the Austrian and Papal Governments should have regarded him with some suspicion. Great then was the satisfaction of Valtancoli, when he was able to report from Bologna on October 4th, 1819, that 'The constant watch kept by the police upon Lord Byron has led to two discoveries. The first is that his Lordship wears on his watch-chain a triangular (or rather pyramidal) seal, on the face of which are engraved three small stars; on the seal are cut the letters F.S.Y. This is the new signal adopted some months ago by the Guelph Society.'

The second 'discovery' was that a letter in the handwriting of Byron's secretary [Lega Zambelli?] addressed to a certain Alexis Gartner in Milan, contained an extract from 'a very curious and very rare work of Captain George Smith, on Jesuitical Masonry'.[11]

Thenceforth the Austrian and Papal Governments felt confirmed in their conviction: the true object of Byron's residence in Italy lay neither in his literary pursuits nor in his amorous adventures, but in the destruction of the established Government:

'The Romantici form a band that aims at the destruction of our literature, our politics, our country. Lord Byron is certainly its champion, and you deceive yourself if you believe that he is only occupied in making a cuckold of Guiccioli. He is libidinous and immoral to excess; but he soon tires of the object of his worship, and offers it as a sacrifice on the altar of his contemptuous pride. But, at the same time, in politics he is not so inconstant. Here he is an Englishman in the fullest meaning of the term. He is like a madman in his desire to ruin everything that does not belong to him, to paralyse every tendency that our society displays towards natural independence, to involve us in ruin and bloodshed, in order that at last the deserted and still smouldering States may be divided among his greedy and demoralized conspirators.'[12]

It is a curious, dark little world, that these emissaries observe through their spy-glasses. Through their eyes we can see Byron in Bologna like a figure in a distorted mirror; he walks towards us and away again, deformed and always slightly out of focus. 'He is not unknown as a man of letters, and in his own country has a reputation of being a fine poet.' He is in Bologna only in order to found a branch of the Società Romantica, and will soon be joined there, for the same purpose, by Lady Morgan and by 'Lord Kinnaird, who shot at the Duke of Wellington'. He has written for the Romantici a set of rules entitled 'Statutes of the Joyous Company'. 'He has with him a young secretary, very expert in different languages, who corresponds in English, French, Italian and German with equal facility.' (The identity of this interesting character is unknown; he can hardly have been Lega Zambelli! But a later note suggests that the reporter meant Kinnaird—who had left Italy a year before.)

'By most careful supervision it has been discovered that his [the secretary's] time is chiefly occupied in writing in various cyphers. But it is not known in what way these writings are dispatched, for they are certainly not sent to the post. There is reason to believe that English travellers, many of whom have introductions to my Lord, are charged with these dispatches.'[13]

On October 25th, when, in actual fact, Byron was at La Mira with Teresa, he is reported to be 'at the Borromean Islands in a pleasant rural retreat, occupying the country-house of his august friend the Princess of Wales'. At Lugano, on December 8th, an anonymous English traveller obligingly supplies the information that Byron's time on the Lakes was spent in circulating 'a number of copies of one of his detestable works entitled *Don Juan,* a work which attacks religion, morals and the Government—and as soon as he had distributed these copies he retired to Venice'. The traveller also told the spy 'that Lord Byron made a regular practice of changing his residence immediately after he had finished a work, so that the Italian Governments might not suspect his intentions'.[14]

So it goes on, until we sometimes almost begin to wonder whether indeed this queer distorted world is the real one. And as if this police espionage were not enough, we then discover that yet other eyes and ears were following the poet's doings in Bologna, not indeed for the same reason, but still watching and listening in ante-rooms and passages, and gleaning everything that could be gleaned secondhand, from friends or acquaintances or servants—all for the sheer love of gossip. This other observer, who spared no pains to make himself agreeable in every direct encounter with Byron, was Count Francesco Rangone, who was now able to call on him every day, and to keep a detailed account of how he spent his time.

'He is invisible', Rangone wrote, 'till three p.m. At four he goes to see his Lady, and remains there until six. He rides for an hour, always in the great Cemetery. At eight he dines, at nine goes to his Amica and remains there until midnight.

He studies until dawn. What he does until three remains a mystery. He eats and drinks little. But', the Count added, 'he does not much like conversation nor seeing what is worth seeing. He lets others talk and says little. He makes himself agreeable, but his expression clearly reflects the moods of his changeable humour.'[15]

For indeed at this time Byron, besides being bored by Rangone, was in one of his most melancholy and tormented moods—'the penalties', as he himself called them, 'of the life I have always lived'. 'I am out of sorts,' he wrote to Murray, 'out of nerves, and now and then (I begin to fear) out of my senses.'[16] A few days after his arrival he went with the Guicciolis to the theatre, to see a performance of Alfieri's *Myrrha*, a play whose subject (the incestuous love of Myrrha for her father and her persecution by the Furies) sufficed to evoke the ghosts that haunted his own darker moods. 'The two last acts', he told Murray, 'threw me into convulsions. I do not mean by that word a lady's hysterics, but the agony of reluctant tears and choking shudder, which I do not often undergo for fiction.'[17] Poor Teresa, though sufficiently prone herself to exhibitions of sensibility did not know what to make of it, and 'went off in the same way. I believe more from fright than any other sympathy—at least with the players; but she has been ill, and I have been ill, and we are all languid and pathetic this morning, with great expenditure of sal volatile'. Teresa, in her account of this evening, put it all down to the skill of the actress, Mme Pelzet, who played the part of Myrrha. 'Byron was affected,' she wrote, 'to the point of fainting, and—unable any longer to hide his convulsions of tears and sobs—he hurriedly left the box.'[18]

After this upsetting evening, Teresa not unnaturally decided to go to the play very seldom—'preferring more gentle sensations to these violent emotions',—and while the Count continued to frequent the theatre and the Bologna assemblies, she spent her evenings at home with Byron. Her rooms, on the second floor of the Palazzo Savioli, looked out on an enchanting garden, with a little fountain in its midst and a pergola of vines—and here the two lovers enjoyed the beauty

of the soft summer nights. 'This sweet existence, however,' says Teresa, 'was interrupted by an expedition which the Countess was obliged to make with the Count on a visit to his estates between Bologna and Ferrara'—a place called Molinella, on the south of the Po.[19] And now Byron, alone in Bologna in the stifling midsummer heat, decided to send for his small daughter Allegra* for company. It was, indeed, time for someone to concern himself with poor little Allegra. In the preceding winter, at the age of two and a half, she had been entrusted to the charge of the Hoppners, who—while smugly taking full credit for 'saving' the child from the atmosphere of Palazzo Mocenigo and the immoral influence of 'Mme la Boulangère'—failed to give her what every child needs most—affection.

'She was not by any means an amiable child,' wrote Hoppner, 'nor was Mrs. Hoppner or I particularly fond of her, but we had taken her to live with us, not thinking Lord Byron's house . . . a very proper one for the infant or her nurse, a young Swiss girl, who besides, had no kind of experience as to the care of children.'[20]

A letter from Mrs. Hoppner to Mrs. Shelley, written while the child was staying with them, contains several comparisons to Allegra's disadvantage, between her and Mrs. Hoppner's own little boy. He, the letter says, was far quicker than she; his feet were always warm and hers like bits of ice, he was 'toujours gai et sautillant', and she 'tranquille et sérieuse comme une petite vieille'. 'Je crois toujours,' Mrs. Hoppner added, tightening her lips, 'que c'est très malheureux que Miss Clairmont oblige cette enfant de vivre à Venise, dont le climat est nuisible en tout au physique de la petite et vraiment, pour ce que fera son père, je trouve un peu triste d'y sacrifier l'enfant. My lord continue de vivre dans une débauche affreuse, qui tôt ou tard le mènera à la misère, puisqu'il dépense au dela de son révenu. J'envoye Allegra aussi souvent que possible lui faire visite, mais comme il n'est visible qu'après trois heures, c'est trop tard pour la

* The illegitimate daughter of Byron and Claire Clairmont, who was now three years old.

petite. D'ailleurs, quand elle va voir son papa, Madame la Boulangère s'en empare, et lui donne à boire et à manger des choses qui font du mal à l'enfant. . . .'[21]

When the spring came, the Hoppners attempted to persuade Byron to send the child, who was suffering from the heat of Venice, to be educated in Switzerland—'where her health is less exposed than it is here, and her chances of education better'.[22] But Byron would have none of it—and now, in the height of the August heat, the child was still in Venice and had just been transferred by the Hoppners from one indifferent stranger to another: first to an Italian family and then to the care of Mrs. Martens, the wife of the Danish Consul. It was at this point that Byron told Scott to send the child to join him—only to learn that her nurse had been dismissed at the beginning of June, and that there was consequently no one to travel with her.

'When I left Venice', he wrote to Scott, 'my daughter had a Governante—of course I supposed that she had one still. Let one be obtained (but not that foolish woman Mrs. Edgecombe on any account) and let Allegra be sent accompanied by Edgecombe the moment this is received. You need not be alarmed about the "Dama"—I wish to see my child—and have her with *me*—now that Hoppner is no longer in Venice—and her being with me will not prevent my return.' 'I send this by express', he added at the end of the letter—'that Allegra may set out without loss of time—you can surely find a proper woman to accompany her. And Edgecombe must come too.'[23]

The reference to the 'Dama' was in reply to a letter from Alexander Scott, who had warmly approved the Swiss plan for the child ('No female education in Italy'),[24] and who had now written to expostulate about Byron's new idea.

'Allow me to tell you what I think on the subject—Allegra, once in the hands of your "Dama" (you will not keep her at a hotel) will be a hostage for your future conduct, and if she should be taken to Ravenna, and if she should there be put in a convent, it will be no easy matter to get her out again. Has the Count any male children? Has

he asked what *Dote* you mean to give her?' Moreover, Scott added that Allegra lived in a family 'where there are a lot of girls, all very attentive to her, and is as happy as childhood may be.'*

This last consideration would probably not, in any case, have weighed much with the child's Papa, and the suggestion in the first part of the letter only reinforced his determination. On August 28th he was writing again, 'I must have her sent immediately, with or *without* a Governante—or Edgecombe shall instantly quit my service.'[25]

At last, at the end of the month, the little girl did arrive —'a child of quite particular amiability', according to Rangone—while Byron took considerable pleasure in observing her increasing resemblance to himself. Like Augusta, he wrote, she could not pronounce her 'r's. She was a true Byron; she had the same dimple in her chin, the same scowl, the same white skin and soft voice, and 'particular liking of music, and her own way in everything'.[26] Byron sat by the fountains in the garden of Palazzo Savioli and watched her play. He taught her to say 'Buon di, Papà'. But sometimes, too—the story is Teresa's—the child's resemblance to Claire would catch his eye, and he would exclaim, 'Enlevez-la! Elle resemble trop à sa mère.'

To pass the time he allowed Rangone to introduce to him some of the literary men of Bologna—the Abate Macchiavelli, the writer Michele Leoni, and the famous philologist Mons. Mezzofanti, 'a Master of Languages, the Briareus of parts of Speech',[27] of whom Stendahl had said, 'quoique si savant, il n'est pas bête'.[28] Once again he rode out to the Cemetery and talked to his old friend the Custodian, taking a ghoulish pleasure in imagining the face of his pretty fifteen-year-old daughter, if it were divested of its flesh. He had a row,

* August 18th, 1819. Allegra was not yet four years old, but Scott's idea was not quite so preposterous as it might seem, for in October 1821, after Allegra had been sent to the convent school at Bagnacavallo, a police report noted, 'It is said that Gamba, the brother of Contessa Guiccioli, will marry Byron's child.'

which nearly ended in a duel, with a captain of Dragoons who tried to sell him a bad horse. He wrote an exasperated letter to Murray about some requested alterations in 'Donny Johnny'. But he could not really feel much interest in anything. Teresa was away and 'as I could never live for but one human being at a time . . . I feel alone and unhappy'.[29]

'I have to do', he wrote, 'with a woman rendered perfectly disinterested by her situation in life, and young and amiable and pretty—in short as good, and at least as attentive as anything of the sex can be, with all the advantages and disadvantages of being scarcely twenty years old and only two out of her Romaguolo convent at Faenza.

'But I feel—and I feel it bitterly—that a man should not consume his life at the side, and on the bosom of a woman, and a stranger; that even the recompense, and it is much, is not enough, and that this Cicisbean existence is to be condemned.

'But I have neither the strength of mind to break my chain, nor the insensibility which would deaden its weight. I cannot tell what will become of me—to leave, or to be left would at present drive me quite out of my senses; and yet to what have I conducted myself?

'I have, luckily, or unluckily, no ambition left; it would be better if I had, it would at least awake me; whereas at present I merely start in my sleep.'[30]

He started, but he was not roused. His melancholy, indeed, at this time had something of the unhappiness of dreams—vague, haunting and pervasive. By Moore it was described in highly romantic terms, which seemed to Teresa so apt that she transcribed them in the 'Vie'.

'That spring of natural tenderness within his soul, which neither the world's efforts nor his own had been able to chill or choke up, was now, with something of its first freshness, set flowing once more. He again knew what it was to love and be loved—too late, it is true, for happiness, and too wrongly for peace, but with devotion enough, on the part of the woman, to satisfy even his thirst for affection, and with

a sad earnestness, on his own, a foreboding fidelity, which made him cling but the more passionately to this attachment, from feeling that it would be his last.'[31]

He tried to assuage his loneliness by visiting the Palazzo Savioli—since Teresa had left him the keys of her rooms and of the garden. He sat 'under a purple canopy of grapes', by the edge of the little stone fountain, thinking of Teresa—and one day (so he told Moore later on) 'there came suddenly into his mind such desolate fancies, such bodings of the misery he must bring on her he loved', that he was overtaken by a passionate fit of weeping. Then he wandered back into the empty house and began to turn over the books in Teresa's sitting-room. Among them was her favourite novel, *Corinne,* which she had often read with him—and about which, in future, he was often to laugh at her. But now he was in no mood for mockery. He turned over its pages, marked a passage here and there—and on the index page wrote the famous letter which, although already familiar, must have a place in this narrative.

My dearest Teresa: I have read this book in your garden,—my love, you were absent, or else I could not have read it. It is a favourite book of yours, and the writer was a friend of mine. You will not understand these English words, and *others* will not understand them, which is the reason I have not scrawled them in Italian. But you will recognize the handwriting of him who passionately loved you, and you will divine that, over a book which was yours, he could only think of love. In that word—beautiful in all languages, but most so in yours—*Amor mio*—is comprised my existence here and hereafter. I feel I exist here, and I fear that I shall exist hereafter,—to *what* purpose you will decide, my destiny rests with you, and you are a woman, eighteen years of age, and two out of a convent. I wish that you had staid there, with all my heart,—or, at least, that I had never met you in your married state.

But all this is too late. I love you, and you love me,—at least you *say so* and act as if you *did* so, which last is a great

consolation in all events. But *I* more than love you, and cannot cease to love you.

Think of me, sometimes, when the Alps and the ocean divide us, but they never will, unless you *wish* it.

BYRON[32]

Teresa kept among her 'relics' the book in which this letter was written, a fat little volume of very small print, bound in purple plush, with Byron's letter written in the blank spaces of the index. A number of passages are underscored in the same ink as the letter. 'I had learned to love', runs one of them, 'from the poets, but real life is not like that. There is in the realities of existence something arid, which every effort is vain to alter.'[33] Another marked passage is in the same vein. It describes how Domenichino, when poor and in prison, assuaged the tedium of his imprisonment by adorning with frescoes the walls of his cell. 'But', the writer continues, 'his sufferings were caused by exterior circumstances, his trouble was not in his soul. *When it is there, nothing can be done. The source of everything is dried up.*'[34]

Finally, at the bottom of page 92, there is a footnote in Byron's handwriting: 'I knew Madame de Staël well—better than she knew Italy, but I little thought that, one day, I should *think with her thoughts* . . . She is sometimes right, and often wrong, about Italy and England; but almost always true in delineating the heart.'[35]

On her return to Bologna, Teresa asked Byron for a translation of what he had written in her book; but this he refused, as he had also previously refused to translate a note which he had written in her copy of *Jacopo Ortis*. 'Lord Byron', Teresa comments, 'never made a show of his sensibility; expressions of it only left his lips or his pen against the grain, and almost involuntarily.'[36]

And then—life at the Palazzo Savioli began again, as before.

Byron at this time was still on the most amicable terms with Count Guiccioli—and was engaged in furnishing (with fur-

niture which he had sent for from Venice) the rooms which the Count had put at his disposal in Palazzo Savioli.

'Doubtless', says Teresa, 'one might call this imprudent, and attribute it to a great many other motives, but the truth cannot be understood without admitting first of all that the Count was a man different from others—an eccentric—seeing everything from his own particular point of view—and often very indulgent and almost generous . . . One must however add to this explanation, that he not only, as a man of intelligence, found Byron agreeable and was flattered by his preference and his intimacy, but that he had at the moment a particular reason to oblige him, for he was asking a favour.'[37]

The favour was a very odd one: that Guiccioli should be given, 'without salary or emolument', the post of British Vice-Consul at Ravenna. The Count's reason for wanting this post, according to Teresa, was that he was on the worst possible terms with the Papal Government, which had intervened against him in a lawsuit—because, Teresa affirms, his opponent had succeeded in currying favour with the Clergy by sending to Rome 'some relics and so-called bodies of Saints'. Guiccioli believed that the post of Consul to a great foreign nation would protect him against the Papal Government and enable him to obtain various privileges—and accordingly we find Byron writing in the most pressing terms to John Murray on his behalf.

'He is a man of very large property,—noble, too,—but he wishes to have a British protection, in case of changes . . . That his office might be useful, I know; as I lately sent off from Ravenna to Trieste a poor devil of an English sailor, who had remained there, sick, sorry and penniless (having been set ashore in 1814) from the want of any accredited agent able or willing to help him homewards.'* Moreover, he

* The sailor was a John Dodd, who having fallen from the rigging was set ashore from 'the *Nancy* Transport' Byron not only provided funds for his journey to Trieste, but gave him an open letter of recommendation. 'According to the best confirmation I could obtain, his story is true and his case is a hard one. I therefore recommend him, as far as lies in my power, to the aid of his more

assured Murray, 'In case of accidents in Italy, he [the Count] would be no feeble adjunct—as you would think if you knew his property.'[88]

The case was pressed by Byron with unusual fervour. 'I can assure you, I should look upon it as a great obligation; but alas! that very circumstance may, very probably, operate to the contrary.' He even went so far as to suggest that he himself should be made Consul, 'that I may make him my Vice'—a suggestion which, if it had been carried out, would have added yet one more absurdity to the tangled tragi-comedy soon to be enacted in Ravenna.

But long before Murray's answer could arrive events had taken another turn. According to Teresa's subsequent account to her lawyers, Count Guiccioli, when he rented the ground-floor of his palace to Byron, took also the opportunity of borrowing a considerable sum from his tenant. In Bologna, however,—'since he had to make a heavy payment to the Casa Balloccanti in Brescia, and as he had already experienced Mylord's generosity, he again turned to Lord Byron for a very large sum of money. Lord Byron promised it, but having been warned by his banker, Imson, that Count Guiccioli was not acting in good faith, he excused himself from giving it, saying that his banker had not at the moment sufficient funds at his disposal.'

The Count then lost his temper and said that it was all Teresa's fault—and when she told him that she had had another relapse and must go to Venice to consult Dr. Aglietti again, he declared that he himself had to return to Ravenna on urgent business, his wife might go to Venice if she pleased, and take Lord Byron for her escort.—'Cosa', she herself comments, 'appena credibile!'[89]

This story, credible or not, is told in a much milder form by Teresa in the 'Vie'. There she merely states that, the Count having a large payment suddenly due to a firm in Brescia, 'Lord Byron lent him, *du soir au matin*, the sum

fortunate fellow-citizens.' The letter is signed 'Byron—Peer of England' (Keats-Shelley Memorial Library, Rome).

he needed—a few thousand francs, a sum insignificant to both of them and especially to Count Guiccioli, whose fortune was colossal, and far more considerable than Byron's at that time . . . The Count', she adds, 'never had any other business with Lord Byron, except for the apartment which he rented to him at Ravenna in the following year.'[40]

Which of these two versions are we to believe? Is it possible that Teresa exaggerated the story when, for the purpose of her lawsuit, it was to her interest to show the Count in the worst possible light. Or, on the other hand, she may have preferred, in later years, for the sake of everyone concerned, to record the less unpleasant version.

What is certain is that Guiccioli was called back to Ravenna on business, and that, whatever his motives may have been, he allowed his wife, 'in view of her delicate health, shaken by so many emotions', to set off to consult Dr Aglietti in Venice, in Byron's company.

'You suggested', says Teresa's Confession to her husband, 'another travelling companion, but I insisted on having Byron, to whom you added my maid and the oldest servant of our household, and I promised to stay in the apartment that you ordered Lega, then your steward, to prepare for me.'[41]

As to the opinion of the world, it is reported for us by the Austrian spy: 'Lord B. departed suddenly with Madame Guiccioli, who was therefore said to have been either carried off by him or sold to him by her husband.'*

So now at last the two lovers were on the road to Venice: Teresa in her husband's coach-and-six, with her maid and her manservant—Byron following in his own great travelling-

* There is some uncertainty as to the precise date of their departure from Bologna. The Austrian spy gives the date as September 12th, Teresa herself, in the 'Vie', speaks of the 15th; while a letter from Byron to Murray is dated from Bologna on September 17th. But since they spent three days on the journey, and Fanny's letter of the 20th shows that by then the two lovers were already settled at La Mira, it seems probable that Byron's letter was misdated and that they left on the 12th.

carriage. 'On faisait les haltes ensemble', Teresa records—'on descendait aux mêmes hotels'—and on the second day of their journey, as the carriages wound their way up the slopes of the Euganean hills, the two lovers made a romantic excursion to Arquà, the resting-place of Petrarch. The road became steeper, the postillions refused to proceed, and it was on foot that the two lovers—at last free and alone—made the last stages of their pilgrimage.

'It was', says Teresa, in her most poetic vein, 'one of those Italian days—all serenity, softness and splendour—when the sky appears to be made of sapphire and opal, and seems to wish to come nearer to the earth, to explain its consoling mysteries.' The path by which the lovers climbed was flanked by vineyards and pomegranate trees, and a gentle breeze—'like that of the Earthly Paradise'—cooled their cheeks.

Petrarch's house, when at last they reached it—for the walk, during which Teresa recited a number of Petrarch's verses, must have taken some time,—was half-ruined, and the ground-floor filled with 'domestic utensils and jars of wheat'. But the two sightseers went on upstairs, and there were the frescoes portraying Laura which Petrarch had caused to be painted, the chair in which the poet died,—and even, in a niche above a door, the embalmed body of Petrarch's cat. Of this Byron characteristically remarked that the hearts of animals were often better than ours—and that this animal's affection may well have put Laura's coldness to shame. The lovers wrote their names together in the visitors' album, Byron remarking that although he had already written his name there, he wished to record it once again, beside hers. Together they leaned out of the window, looking down over the vineyards and orchards—and at last together they walked down to the poet's tomb—a sarcophagus of rose-coloured marble, in the midst of a grove of young laurel-trees, where some village children were chasing butterflies. They drank water from the fountain, and Teresa recited yet another of Petrarch's sonnets, while the children brought them some grapes and peaches,—Byron taking the opportunity to remark

with satisfaction that hardly ever before, in the whole long journey, had he seen his companion eating or drinking, and that in this she represented 'the fulfilment of one of his dreams'. Then, arm in arm, in silence, 'absorbed by the emotions of the past, the uncertainty of the future and the strangeness of their present situation', they descended the hill to rejoin their coach.

'I cannot linger', Teresa told Moore many years later, 'over these recollections of happiness. The contrast with the present is too dreadful. If a blessed spirit, while in the full enjoyment of heavenly happiness, were sent down to this earth to suffer all its miseries, the contrast could not be more dreadful between the past and the present.'[42]

But, alas, even this one halcyon day was not to be left undisturbed, for as the lovers approached their coaches, loud cries of anger reached their ears. A fight was in progress between their servants and the postillions—and although Byron at once brought it to an end, Teresa did not fail to record his annoyance 'at having to descend from the sublime and tender heights to which his soul had risen, to the vulgar and prosaic details of material existence'.

They spent the night at the inn at Padua—where the innkeeper kissed Byron's hands with such deep emotion that Teresa, 'although no sign of respect for Lord Byron could seem to her excessive', inquired as to its cause, and learnt that in the previous year Byron—by coming to the innkeeper's assistance in a moment of crisis,—had re-established his fortunes and thus earned his undying gratitude. This showed itself on the present occasion by the most magnificent banquet that the inn could provide, and by some music in the adjoining room—'attentions', says Teresa, 'which touched Byron so deeply that tears came to his eyes'. But their stay, so harmoniously begun, was to end less agreeably. As the travellers were on the point of setting forth next morning, who should call upon Byron, having arrived the night before at the same inn, but Contessa Benzoni with her Cavalier Servente, Conte Rangone!

'Their expression as they came in', Byron told Teresa the

next morning, 'was embarrassed and comic. They seemed uncertain whether I deserved their blame or their protection. The Countess asked me where I was going—and if you were going with me. I replied that I was going to Venice—and that my plans were uncertain, except that I would certainly not remain in Venice where so many lies had been invented against me and my friends. I added that your health was still delicate—that you were going by the Count's wishes to consult Prof. Aglietti who had lately looked after you in Ravenna; that you were accompanied by your servants and that in Venice your lodging was prepared according to the orders of the Count, who had been called back to Ravenna on business, but who, rather than leave you alone, had been delighted that I should be your escort.'[43]

'This explanation', Byron added, 'appeared only partially to satisfy his two visitors.' The whole story soon went the rounds of Venice. This liaison, it was settled by the Venetian ladies, had now broken the laws of correct Serventismo; Teresa must have lost her head completely . . . and what could her husband be thinking of? The society which had tolerated all Byron's previous sordid adventures could not accept a serious love-affair. 'You must really scold your friend,' said Contessa Benzoni to Moore soon after. 'Till this unfortunate affair he conducted himself *so* well!'[44]

The whole incident came as a shock to the two lovers, breaking in on their dreams of a whole life together, as sweet, effortless and romantic as the three days' journey. 'We were very near going off together from Padua, for France and America,' Byron told Kinnaird two months later, 'but as I had more prudence, and more experience, and knew that the time might come when both might repent, I paused and prevailed upon her to pause also.'[45] But Teresa—so she tells us —'avait la confiance de son âge'. She could not believe that she would ever repent.

That evening, after a few hours' rest at Byron's villa at La Mira, they arrived in Venice. Here, according to Teresa's promise to her husband, they should have separated, Byron going to the Palazzo Mocenigo and Teresa to the apartment

on one of the small canals in Venice, disagreeable on account of their exhalations', which her husband's steward, Lega Zambelli, had prepared for her in Palazzo Malipiero. On the 17th, however, Lega Zambelli was reporting to Count Guiccioli that although 'the Signora Contessina arrived safely on Tuesday evening, and had sent for him at once, she said that owing to the fatigue of the journey she would postpone her removal to the lodging which had been prepared, and would stay instead in the house of Lord Byron, who had kindly prepared an apartment.'[46]

It was plain, however, to both lovers, that they could not indefinitely remain in Venice together—so, after Prof. Aglietti's examination, the following careful letter was dispatched to Teresa's husband.

My dear Alessandro: I arrived yesterday evening in Venice, in excellent condition, because the two days' journey had done me more good than any medicine . . . This morning Aglietti came, and having examined me, ordered me no drugs, but instead advised another journey and change of air. Your affairs, I feel sure, would not allow you to come with me, so Byron having offered to take me with him to the lakes of Garda and Como—a journey suitable to the season, and which he is now thinking of taking, not being much pleased with Venice,—I ask for your permission, and await its speedy arrival with the greatest anxiety.

Since I arrived in Venice I have not even gone out of the house, and shall only do so to see the girls.

Byron greets you and charges me to tell you that the English friend to whom he wrote about the Vice Consulate, etc., has answered him that he will send in a petition at once and do everything possible to obtain it. Pray answer me quickly. Greet my Papa and all friends and relations. Goodbye, my Alessandro, write soon and believe me, Your affectionate spouse TERESA[47]

To this letter Guiccioli, to Teresa's own surprise, replied

'that if this excursion could contribute to re-establishing her health, she could make it, and that, as far as he was concerned, he saw no objection'.[48] But meanwhile the lovers had already moved to Byron's villa at La Mira.

It was a most attractive place. The great Villa Foscarini on the banks of the Brenta was surrounded by a romantic 'giardino all' inglese', with little toy lakes and bridges, and a great avenue of plane trees led along the water's edge. Here, for the first time, Teresa and Byron were alone together—and one can only suppose that they were happy. In some ways, Teresa's visit to La Mira is curiously reminiscent of another happy interlude in Byron's life: Augusta's visit to Newstead. Teresa, indeed, and Augusta were the only women—the only human beings, except for some children and servants—with whom Byron was ever able to cast off every trace of his neurotic self-consciousness. And when he was at ease, he could laugh all day like a child, with a child's love of nicknames and baby-talk and a schoolboy's taste for practical jokes. The vaults of Newstead had resounded with his and Augusta's laughter, and now it was a similar laughter that echoed in the gardens of Villa Foscarini. Teresa was warm and gay and kind—and she adored him—and she was young.

Round her she made an atmosphere of life,
The very air seemed lighter from her eyes . . .[49]

When they were not laughing or love-making, they rode along the Brenta, past the elegant Palladian villas where the Venetian nobles spent their summers, or sat on the rustic benches, beside the little lakes of the 'English Garden', while Byron read aloud the romantic works of Teresa's choice or his own translation of Pulci's *Morgante Maggiore* on which he was working at this time. He was also then busy with the third Canto of *Don Juan*—'No occupation for him', writes Teresa, 'but just a distraction,'—and she adds that his facility in composition was so great that he would often tell her to go on chattering while he wrote, 'for he worked much better while he saw her and heard her voice'. In the evenings

there was more reading aloud, or Teresa played to him on the piano he had ordered for her, and even tried to persuade him to join her in duets.

Only one shadow fell upon their days:—now and again a messenger would appear from Venice, bringing a letter from Count Guiccioli, forwarded by Lega, or, later on, some disturbing letter from Teresa's own relations—or a note from Fanny. She, according to the 'Vie', had actually gone to La Mira with Teresa—'une dame Silvestrini qui lui tenait compagnie'. But if so, she cannot have stayed there long,—for by September 20th she was back in Venice, opening the Count's letters to Lega and we have little doubt, those addressed to Teresa as well) and proffering to Teresa her exuberant sympathy and advice.[50]

'The Cavaliere has written to Lega,' Fanny wrote, 'asking him to keep him *informed* about his wife He asks him [Lega] to give more detailed news of you, which he is awaiting impatiently. In answer Lega will write to him in the most appropriate manner.'[51]

Fanny's letters also contained a great many domestic details. Byron had reason to believe that the clerk of the British Consulate, Edgecombe, who had been acting as his accountant, had been cheating him—and he now set Lega Zambelli, assisted by the zealous Fanny, to look into the accounts. 'The papers I enclose', writes Fanny, 'will show you how much has been stolen in seventeen days . . . Lega, as you may well believe, has used all possible diligence not to leave a difference of even one soldo. On the comb, as I wrote you, I found a difference of eight lire.'[52]

Then there was Teresa's shopping. She required some white merino, and Fanny bustled off to get it from 'the Jew under the Procuratie'; she also ordered a new corkscrew for Byron, and 'some brandy of the best quality', from someone 'who will take nothing but the honour of having served me'. And she took the opportunity to put in a good word for a manservant whom Byron had dismissed: 'The poor young man, is he then to be ruined? He is so timid, discouraged, prostrated, and what can he do? You, who have been granted

an excellent heart, you only can move Mylord. He will not refuse to listen to your persuasive supplications.'

All this was delightfully domestic—nor was there anything half-hearted about the gusto with which Fanny dwelled upon the thought of the two lovers in their pastoral retreat. 'So now La Mira has become for you the enchanted abode of Armida.' It was true, she remarked, that 'il Cavaliere' had written again, announcing that 'before the end of October he will be here'. But the end of October was still far away!

'I entirely approve', wrote Fanny, 'your idea of awaiting your husband *a piede fermo* . . . I can imagine . . . the nature of the letters you write to your Alessandro, and I can also imagine the effect his two letters produced on you—although he will not, I think, understand what you mean, his own feelings being so confused and so contradictory.'

But, indeed, it would not have been easy for anyone, at this time, to be sure what Teresa's letters meant. Here is the first of them, as printed in the Guiccioli Memoirs, but unfortunately incomplete.[53]

My dear Alessandro: I had written two letters, meaning to send them by the last two couriers, but I have always been too late in sending them to the post. This will make you laugh, but will not surprise you much, because you know me. I have received three letters from you in the last few days, and with this of mine will reply to them all. It is impossible, my Alessandro, for me to send you Valeriano—you will realize that it is not suitable for me, in my position, to remain with one woman only. . . .

I have not seen Lepri because, as you will see from the address, I am not in Venice but at La Mira, a delightful place, where I have come by Aglietti's advice . . . I am going on looking after myself under the direction of Aglietti and also of the surgeon Campana, having had much inconvenience in the last few days from piles, from which I am not yet quite recovered. He has, however, reassured me on the point which interested me most, the supposed *prolapsus uteri*, so that I am much more at ease. Byron, who overwhelms me

with kindness, greets you cordially. By the next post I will write to you at greater length and a little better, because at this moment I am dropping from sleep. Goodbye, my Alessandro, send me your news and be sure of your most affectionate consort TERESA

Alessandro, however, appears not to have been completely reassured, and three days later, obviously with the intention of preventing his coming to see for himself what was happening, Teresa was writing again.

Dearest Alessandro You have seen the letter I wrote to Papa. I am not sorry, but you must not think that not having spoken of my health is a proof that I am well. Indeed it is now a few days since the piles—a very tiresome ailment—have been followed by a bad headache, and a little cough has begun again. For these last two complaints I am advised to travel, but I am determined not to do so without thinking it over a little. I am still at La Mira, a delightful place, where one can very well lead, as I am doing, a retired life, without its being at all tedious

I cannot tell you all the attentions of Mylord. He has sent for a pianoforte for me, some music, quantities of books, and then [I have] his company which is of greater value than them all, so that if only I were well, I should not know what to wish for . . . Byron greets you and is not very pleased not to see even a simple greeting for him in the letter you sent me recently. I am sorry to hear you are so much annoyed. . . .[54]

Here the letter, in the incomplete version printed in the Guiccioli Memoirs, breaks off abruptly, and we are left wondering whether the causes of the Count's annoyance were not more complex than we are told. For in the interval Count Ruggero Gamba, Teresa's father, who from the first had viewed his daughter's relationship with the English Mylord with the greatest disapproval and who had only now realized that his daughter was not still in Venice, had intervened. He hurried in from his country-house to Ravenna, told Count

Guiccioli roundly that he 'did not approve of allowing an inexperienced young woman to go off alone, and still less, escorted by a young man like Lord Byron'—and added that 'if her husband refused to join her at once, he would go and fetch her himself'.*

Guiccioli excused himself as best he could, explaining his indulgence as due to his wife's ill-health and his complete confidence in her honour and Lord Byron's—and added that 'as to the world's opinion, he was entirely indifferent to it'. He did, however, end by promising that he would go and fetch Teresa, and meanwhile her father, still far from reassured, sent her a long letter of warning—a letter which, in the opinion of Teresa, was 'affectionate and indulgent, in accordance with his adorable character', but which did not attempt to conceal his anxiety, and told her of further gossip which had reached him from his son in Rome.

'You have hardly entered the world,' Count Gamba wrote, 'but it will make no allowance for your youth, the purity of your heart, the innocence of your journey, or for all the circumstances which may justify your present position. This most seductive young man is by your side, protecting you—no doubt in a manner honourable and worthy of you both. That may be enough to convince me, and your husband, and your own conscience. But the world will not be satisfied with these arguments. The retired life that you are leading will only provide further weapons for those who may wish to criticize your position.'†

This letter reached Teresa soon after her husband's permission to set forth with Byron to tour the Italian Lakes, and it awakened in her, more than any other feeling, a childish disappointment at having to give up her journey—'an excursion which her imagination painted as one of the joys which one can only hope to fulfil in heaven'. She took her father's

* 'Vie', p. 260. Teresa adds that Count Gamba had heard that 'people were talking and attributing to him [her husband] every sort of turpitude, such as an intention of selling me'.

† 'Vie', p. 262. This letter too only exists in Teresa's transcription of it in the 'Vie' and should therefore, in style if not in content, be taken with some caution.

letter into the garden, and sat there, she says, with its pages open on her lap and tears of disappointment running down her cheeks, until Byron came out and found her. He took up the letter, read it, and exclaimed, 'So they are still pursuing me all the way to Italy!'—'But who are these persecutors?' Teresa inquired, 'and why do they treat you like this?'

'I will tell you later,' said Byron, 'but meanwhile what is necessary is to reassure your father. Answer him at once—consult your heart and your duty—and do not think of me. My destiny is subject to your will—and you know it.'[55]

Teresa obeyed, and wrote to 'reassure' her father, by promising that she would remain at La Mira until her husband came to fetch her—and would give up the expedition to the Lakes.

The trouble about Teresa's reports of her conversations with Byron is that she has no ear for any style but her own. It is possible that Byron's meaning was what she conveys; it is seldom possible to believe that that is how he expressed it! It was on that same afternoon, she wrote, that Byron—with reference to the 'calumnies' that her father and brother had heard about him, sat with her for many hours in the shade of the plane trees and—in a conversation that lasted until dusk—told her the story of his marriage and separation. The whole story? It is difficult to think so. The *leitmotiv* in Teresa's version, is 'his ignorance, then and always, of the true causes of the separation'. She considered the faults of which he had then been guilty 'such as could be forgiven by any kind, religious and reasonable woman', and Annabella's subsequent silence, 'which wished to appear magnanimous', was, on the contrary, 'the most poisonous weapon that could have been used against him, opening the door to all the accusations of his adversaries'. The story of Byron's marriage, then and subsequently, remained for Teresa one of cruel injustice done to *him*—of the incomprehensible coldness and implacability of a woman he had trusted—and of hypocritical British cant. Yet it is clear, from the context,

that later on—though not on that day—the story of Astarte did reach Teresa's ears, for she speaks of 'the atrocious calumny', which *then* his generous spirit could not imagine. And many years later, we find, scribbled in pencil on the back of a letter which she received during her first visit to London, after Byron's death, the following remarks:

'Lord Byron needed a companion who was not only fond of him and devoted to him, but all of whose faculties were occupied in making him happy, without his knowing it. Certainly she [Lady Byron] had something to bear—but his faults were only caprices—and where is the woman whose husband does not give her cause to exercise some virtue? Is it not said in the marriage formula that one takes one's husband for better for worse? She should have been indulgent—have been tender with this gift of God, this superior intelligence—tried to diminish the sufferings that were the result of his great gifts—and not tread him underfoot . . . The most terrible injury against him is the silence and mystery about the reasons for their separation, a mystery which, since it makes any supposition possible, has even caused certain inclinations to be attributed to him, which one hesitates to reproduce in words. To confute such horrors would be unworthy of one who has known the purity, modesty and simplicity of his sentiments.'[56]

But these are the reflections of later years. The girl who listened to Byron on that September evening was moved by much simpler feelings: indignation against the injustice that had been done to her lover, pity for the pain he had endured. As they sat there together under the plane trees, England and Annabella, and the whole pack of his accusers, seemed very far away. 'Their hatred cannot harm me any more', he told her, 'so long as *you* believe in me.'[57]

There was, however, in Teresa's mind an immediate problem- -and one which the letters she was now receiving made increasingly pressing: how to keep her father quiet, and her husband away, for as long as possible. It is clear from both her letters and Byron's at the time that they, like the rest of

the world, were more than a little disconcerted by the Count's peculiar behaviour, however convenient.

'I can't make him [Guiccioli] out,' wrote Byron to Scott, 'conjectures are useless—we shall see. He ought to have been here last week, but delays a month longer.' As for himself—'I do not leave these parts immediately—and am not sure that I shall leave them before Spring, being as undecided as when I saw you in Venice.'[58]

On the following day Teresa sent off to her husband a letter in which an injudicious petulance does not conceal that she is both surprised and bewildered.

. . . I hear from a letter of Papa's that you are displeased that I should have *left the apartment.* I do not know whether you say this for conventional reasons or *from some other motive.* But in any case, my Alessandro, rather than talk to others you might have made your complaints to me, and if they had seemed reasonable, I would have done all I could to satisfy you. But instead you either don't write at all, or merely two lines about my health and minor matters, and your own business. Which of us then is most in the wrong? This, even without speaking of many things that are not satisfactory to me, owing to the mystery in which you veil them. I enclose a letter from Prof. Campana, which he wrote to me yesterday from Venice. It will partly show you my condition, to which I can add that the cough is not at all gone yet. As I desired to know Papa's wishes as well as yours, I did not start on my journey, and now perhaps the weather and this half-cured ailment will prevent it. You will not come back until All Saints. These were not your promises when you left me. What shall I do meanwhile? I assure you that I am very much embarrassed. It was indeed necessary that I should have a *Man* and a *Friend*—like Byron—to relieve me a little in this situation, and I assure you that if, from now onwards, I am to compare Men with Him (the only person whom I see) I shall always be very dissatisfied with everyone. It is impossible to desire a better friend. . . .

Accept the cordial greetings of Byron, and from me the assurances of your most affectionate Consort.[59]

It is not known whether this letter received any reply. The Guiccioli Memoirs say that Teresa wrote again to her husband on October 10th, but do not quote the letter; and they quote only in part the somewhat more conciliatory note which she sent him on October 23rd, when the date of his arrival was very close at hand:

'I continue to improve in health. I hope you will find me well in this respect, as you will find me in regard of other good intentions, which you almost seem to doubt, by the way you constantly persist in ignoring them. Byron wishes to be remembered to you in Friendship, and looks forward as I do to seeing you.'[60]

This letter, as printed in the Guiccioli Memoirs, consists only of these few lines; it is possible that the part left out, as well as the two letters omitted, may have contained references to a much more delicate matter: the new request for a loan which, at this stage of the proceedings, Guiccioli is supposed to have made to his wife's lover. The amount in question was no less than a thousand pounds, a sum which was then lying in the hands of Byron's banker in Bologna, but which the Count professed to think would be more advantageously placed in his own. Security, he added, would be given, and five per cent interest paid—as the acceptance of the sum on any other terms he would hold to be an *avvilimento*. This story we owe to Moore, who commented that although Teresa's own disinterestedness was beyond question, he yet thought it so important, 'for her lover's sake as well as her own, to retrieve, while there was yet time, their last imprudent step, that even the sacrifice of this sum . . . did not appear to me by any means too high a price to pay for it'.

But Byron would have none of it. 'Nothing could be more humorous and amusing than the manner in which, in his newly assumed character of a lover of money, he dilated on the many virtues of a thousand pounds, and his deter-

mination not to part with a single one of them to Count Guiccioli.' The three men—for Scott had joined the party after dinner—enjoyed their wine and the excellent joke—and before the night was over, Byron had laid a wager with Alexander Scott that he would 'save the lady and the money too'.[61]

This story, it is but fair to add, Teresa absolutely denies. 'What Moore said he heard in Venice can only be a misunderstanding about the little loan [the one in Bologna] or else the consequence of a joke, or a mystification of Lord Byron's.'[62]

Teresa's acquaintance with Moore on this occasion was of the slightest, and we know that, at their first meeting, he did not even think her very pretty. When he came out to La Mira, she tells us, Byron, *très ému*, begged her to come down to the drawing-room to make his guest's acquaintance. 'But Moore could only speak English, and their conversation was therefore very short, with Lord Byron as their interpreter. The two friends then left together for Venice, where Lord Byron offered Moore the noble hospitality of his own palace.'[63]

When the time came for Moore's departure, he returned to La Mira to say goodbye to Teresa. She found him in the dining-room, 'with a glass of Bordeaux in his hand—an attitude which harmonized with his gay and animated countenance'. She gave him a letter of introduction to her brother—and she also observed that Byron handed to him 'a little bag of papers. "These", Byron said, "are my Memoirs, which I am giving to Moore." One could read on his fine countenance the most exquisite and noble sentiments.'[64] Alas, Teresa adds, that so much confidence should have been ill-placed! She was never able to forgive Moore for what she considered his betrayal, in allowing the manuscript—'which contained every slightest detail as to what occurred between his wife and Lord Byron'—to be destroyed.

Teresa's letter to her brother, according to Moore himself, was given to him open (as good manners in Italy require)—and he therefore felt no scruple about either reading it or

copying it—adding as a half-hearted excuse that 'the greater part of it was, I have little doubt, dictated by my noble friend'. The passage which he quotes, however, is so like Teresa's answer to her brother in July, that there can be no doubt as to its authorship.

'He [Moore] is a friend of Lord Byron, and much more accurately acquainted with his history than those who have related it to you. He will accordingly describe to you, if you ask him, the *shape*, the *dimensions*, and whatever else you may please to require, of *that Castle in which he keeps imprisoned a young and innocent wife, etc.* My dear Pietro, when you have had a good laugh, do send two lines in answer to your sister who loves you, and ever will love you with the greatest tenderness.'[85]

Teresa now felt so secure, that she could afford to laugh at her brother's fears Yet, had she known Byron better, she would perhaps at this moment have begun to notice certain small danger signals. He hung about waiting for the English post, and fretted when it was late; he spent a long time over it when it came; he was less attentive to her chatter; he took rather more brandy at night, and a great deal more magnesia in the morning. And when Moore arrived and he went off to Venice with him, it was 'with all the glee of a schoolboy who has been given a holiday'.

Moreover—but this Teresa fortunately could not know—the old flippant note was creeping back in his letters to his friends.

'What you say of the long evenings at the Mira, or Venice, reminds me of what *Curran* said to Moore—"so I hear you have married a pretty woman—and a very good creature too—an excellent creature—pray—um—*how do you pass your evenings?*" it is a devil of a question that, and perhaps as easy to answer with a wife as with a mistress; but surely they are longer than the nights.' However, he adds, 'I am all for morality now, and shall confine myself henceforward to the strictest adultery.'[86]

The truth was, of course, that Byron, once again, was beginning to get bored. Teresa was young and pretty and

tender—but such continual adoration, even expressed in a language not one's own, soon became a little cloying. And her gaiety, which at first he had mistaken for a true temperamental affinity—'we have laughs together—*our* laughs', he told Augusta—proved only to be animal high spirits, without a touch of humour. Once again tedium descended upon him.

Men grow ashamed of being so very fond,
They sometimes also get a little tired,
(But that, of course, is rare) and then despond:
The same things cannot always be admired,
Yet 'tis 'so nominated in the bond',
That both are tied till one shall have expired.[67]

This, perhaps, was one of the passages that Byron did not translate for Teresa's benefit.

And Byron's tedium, as Moore had observed in 1816, always took the same form: it brought 'some return of this restless and roving spirit'. It was, as he penetratingly observed, 'the habit of the writer's mind to seek relief, when under the pressure of any disquiet or disgust, in that sense of freedom which told him that there were homes for him elsewhere'.[68] In 1816, and later on, in 1823, his 'roving spirit' led him to thoughts of Greece; in 1820, in Ravenna, he played with the idea of rushing off to Naples to take part in the Neapolitan revolution. And now, in the dull evenings at La Mira, he turned his mind to a 'South American project', which would take him and Allegra (but of Teresa there is no mention) to settle in Venezuela, 'and pitch my tent there for good and all'.

'I am not tired of Italy, but a man must be a Cicisbeo and a Singer in duets, and a connoisseur of Operas—or nothing—here. I have made some progress in all these accomplishments, but I can't say that I don't feel the degradation. Better be an unskilful Planter, an awkward settler,—better be a hunter, or anything, than a flatterer of fiddlers, and fan carrier of a woman. I like women—God he knows—but the more their system here developes upon me, the worse it seems, after Turkey too; here the *polygamy* is all on the female side. I have been an intriguer, a husband, a whoremonger, and now I am a

Cavalier Servente—by the holy! it is a strange sensation . . . Yet,' he adds, 'I want a country and a home, and—if possible—a free one. I am not yet thirty-two years of age.—I might still be a decent Citizen, and found a house, and a family as good—or better—than the former.'[69]

Here is the same note that sounded in Byron's letter to Hobhouse in Bologna, two months earlier. But now, for the first time—and at a moment when passion was temporarily sated and ardour stilled—an opportunity presented itself for an honourable release. After innumerable letters and protests, Count Guiccioli at last appeared in Venice on All Saints' Day, to fetch his wife.*

His arrival, according to Teresa, was preceded by a letter to her, telling her to go and wait for him 'if Byron did not mind, at his Palazzo Mocenigo, as he himself and his son would arrive there for a two days' stay'.[70] This curious choice of residence is explained by Teresa as 'the best way to defeat Venetian gossip',[71] and her father seems to have been of the same opinion, for, on October 30th, he had written to her:

'I have just left Casa Guiccioli after speaking to Alessandro, whom I have left in a good humour. He did not say anything to me about going to stay at Mylord's house, nor did I think it desirable to ask him about it. But I am glad that it will be so, and that your Husband's friendship with Byron will thus be consolidated, this being the only way of putting an end to gossip, and perhaps the only one by which the peace can still be kept.'

It is clear from what follows that Count Gamba still believed his daughter's protestations as to the platonic nature of her tie with Byron, while not unaware of the intensity of her feelings.

* Hoppner's malicious satisfaction when the news of Guiccioli's plans reached him, was reflected in a letter to Byron: 'Count G. is a most amiable man and will, I hope, be as complaisant to his wife as Menelaüs was of old to his; as the lady no doubt will be as penitent as the fair Helen is described by Homer to have been, when Paris was but out of the way.' October 30th, 1819. Unpublished letter belonging to Sir John Murray.

'I pity your state and know by experience that love is something that is felt and cannot be commanded. But you must never forget that you are a wife, and that it is your duty to make your husband happy; and that this cannot be achieved without the greatest circumspection.

'Your friend's wisdom makes this very difficult task easier for you, and I am full of hope. Remember me kindly to Mylord, to whom I am much obliged.

'Before leaving Venice, write down the excellent regime of that good counsellor Aglietti, and try to reacquire your former health, which your husband desires intensely, and rightly.'[72]

By the time Guiccioli arrived, Teresa was already in Venice, having hurried there to nurse Byron, who had caught a severe tertian fever from getting wet in a heavy thunderstorm. During his delirium he alternatively raved that he saw his mother-in-law in the room, or composed verses against her, which he dictated to his valet, Fletcher. 'You see', he told Teresa afterwards, before destroying them, 'the truth comes out, not only in drunkenness but in delirium.'[73] 'On my senses coming back,' he wrote to Murray, '[I] found Fletcher sobbing on one side of the bed and la Contessa G. weeping on the other.'[74]

Before he was fully recovered, Count Guiccioli, accompanied by one of his sons, was also in the Palazzo. His meeting with Byron was, Teresa assures us, 'as courteous as in the past', and he told the Poet that he would be only too delighted to see him again in Ravenna, 'but that, owing to comments and gossip, an obstacle had arisen, and this obstacle was Count Gamba'.[75] He added that he was therefore obliged to appeal to Byron's honour not to return there—'so as not to make trouble between Guiccioli and the Gamba family'. Moreover, he asked him to say nothing about all this to the Countess. 'Lord Byron did not know what to say; the Count seemed to him to be within his rights, Count Gamba also; he could only conceal his feelings and his sadness within his own heart.[76] He had now recovered, and, in spite of Guiccioli's presence, was apparently spending his

evenings with Teresa—but no longer peacefully as before. Even when the old Count's rigid figure and ironic smile was not actually before their eyes, they were very acutely conscious of his presence. One evening, when Guiccioli was at the theatre and Byron working at Don Juan, Teresa looked over his shoulder and asked what a certain passage meant. "Nothing," he replied, "but 'your husband's coming.'" She started up in a fright and said "*Oh, my God, is* he *coming?*" thinking it was *her own*, who either was or ought to have been at the theatre. You may suppose we laughed when she found out the mistake.'[77]

As for Byron's description of the Count's visit, it is considerably franker than Teresa's.

'At last the Cavaliere Conte Guiccioli came to Venice,' he told Kinnaird, 'where he found his wife considerably improved in health, but hating him so cordially, that they quarrelled violently. He had said nothing before, but at last, on finding this to be the case, he gave her the alternative, *him* or *me*. She decided instantly for *me*. not being allowed to have both, and the lover generally having the preference. But he had also given her a paper of rules to which he wished her to assent, all of them establishing his authority.'[78]

These rules, which the Count had prepared before his arrival, and which are referred to by Teresa in the 'Vie' as 'embarrassing proposals and requirements', form one of the oddest documents in the whole story. It was customary, indeed, in some Italian cities, for the marriage agreement to contain some clauses concerning the details of conjugal daily life—in such matters as the number of horses and carriages, the ordering of the household, the box at the theatre, the summer holidays. But these rules—like those which the Count had prepared for his two former wives—went a great deal further. From the hour of his wife's waking until her bedtime—even as to the manner of her toilet, and the way she might amuse herself during his siesta—he claimed the right to supervise and control every action, and indeed every thought, of her existence.

November, 1819 INDISPENSABLE RULES[79]

1. Let her not be late in rising, nor slow over her dressing, nor fussy over lacing and washing, with danger of injuring herself.
2. Let her busy herself at once with those household matters which are within her competence, striving to obtain the greatest cleanliness and the best order, and all this with method, continuous diligence, patience and economy. Until she has acquired the experience that can only be got by practice and by a habit of continuous and constant diligence, patience and memory, and finally by practising the aforesaid economy, order and method, let her offer suggestions and ask for advice, but not give orders . . . Let her reflect that in so much as she neglects the care of her business and of the house, so much and more shall I neglect her. In so much as she despises practical matters and the aforesaid cares and duties, so much and more shall I feel contempt, dislike and aversion for her, who, while she is served by all, is of service to none, and while greatly increasing my burdens and anxieties, refuses to bear any part of them herself, exposing me thus to trouble and damage of every kind.
3. After midday, let her spend the time until dinner with me, in conversation and reading aloud, which she shall share with my son.
4. After dinner, when I rest, let that be her regular time for music.
5. After our drive together, in the early part of the evening, reading aloud as before dinner, then together to the theatre, then conversation and to supper and bed together.

Such was the Count's regulation of daily life. He then passed on to general injunctions, designed to bring about 'that full mutual satisfaction which is the true happiness of married couples'.

6. Let her not be too conceited or impatient, for one can only learn with time, experience and much reflection. Let her not do things casually, because a wish or an idea presents itself, but only because this idea, first considered and examined by her, and then always referred to her husband or to experts, is seen to be well-advised.
7. Let her accustom herself to the aforesaid prudent economy in household matters, and to economy and care in her personal concerns, for which she now, out of vanity, declares her contempt. Let her be content with the allowance of twelve monthly zecchini, the complete interest of her dowry received until now. I might possibly, in the event of finding myself overflowing with riches, provide something more, but at most not more than two hundred zecchini a year. Let the regret of refusing useless requests therefore be spared me.
8. Let her not care for pomp and luxury, as her husband does not. Let her reflect that only a similarity of habits can render conjugal life agreeable . . . She can easily change hers, which have only lasted for a few years, but I cannot change mine, which have more than forty years of absolute and deliberate practice behind them.
9. Let her be satisfied with the rooms and furniture as they are, not arguing about this, nor fussing about details.

And now, at last, the Count passed on to his real purpose.

10. Let her receive as few visitors as possible.
11. Let her be always prepared to live, go away or come back, as best suits her husband's plans, and let her therefore keep her things in order, giving up her longing for travel, or for dwelling-places which do not suit her husband's or her family's arrangements.
12. Let her be completely docile with her husband. Then

only will she be able to ask of him that any orders and complaints which in any way affect her, should be communicated directly to her and not to others.

13. She may, however, sweetly, modestly and tentatively, submit her own views and reflections, and even answer the arguments that I shall offer her. But if all this does not convince her, then she shall refrain from insisting, and yield with good will and good temper.

14. Let her have a constant and preventive care of her health, which has been damaged by her own carelessness and thoughtlessness, vanity and capriciousness, and let her not be alarmed by complaints which a wise diagnosis show to be non-existent.

The reference in this clause to recent events is unmistakable. And now come the most significant paragraphs:

15. Let her never cause trouble between her husband and her father, or anyone else Let her consider him [her husband] as Father, Husband, Friend and constant faithful companion, and give no one else preference over him.

16. If she should feel inclined to do so, let her at once bring such a relation to an end, and not trust herself, otherwise she will be for ever condemned in the opinion of her husband, and of a wise Society.

17. How can she always be completely sincere with her husband with this worm gnawing at her heart? And where one cannot be open and sincere, how is it possible to be happy together?

The old Count does not appear to have reflected that the mode of life suggested in the earlier part of this document would hardly be a training in frankness and sincerity. The rest of the paper is a series of threats as to the consequences which would attend his wife's refusal to obey his rules. She would, he says, no longer be considered the mistress of the

house: its management would be handed over to the servants; while his children would despise her. She would be given no money, not having any property of her own. Her complaints would be believed by no one, and at her husband's death she would have difficulty in finding another.

To this document Teresa replied with greater brevity, but considerable spirit:

CLAUSES IN REPLY TO YOURS

1. To get up whenever I like.
2. Of my toilette I will not speak.
3. In domestic matters to be absolute mistress of all that is within a Lady's province.
4. I do not refuse the reading aloud with you, at which your son's presence is a matter of indifference to me.
5. To dine together as usual, but to spend the time of your rest as I please, even if it were in pulling the donkey's tail.
6. Drive together, Theatre, Conversation, bed, supper, etc., —all together, as you please.

'But all this,' she added, in a parody of her husband's clauses, 'would not be enough to live together peacefully, etc., —if you should refuse to grant me the following:

1. A horse with everything necessary for riding.
2. *To receive, without discrimination, any visitor who may come.'*

Deadlock had now been reached, and in despair of convincing his headstrong young wife, the old Count went to Byron himself.

'He actually came to *me*, crying about it, and I told him, "if you abandon your wife I will take her undoubtedly; it is my duty—it is also my inclination—in case of such extremity; but if, as you say, you are really disposed to live with, and like her as before, I will not only not carry further disturb-

ance, into your family, but even repass the Alps; for I have no hesitation in saying that Italy will be now to me insupportable." '[80]

In all this, it will be noticed, Teresa herself was hardly consulted at all. We know that she quarrelled with her husband; we may suspect that she pleaded and argued with Byron. But storms and tears were in vain. At such times 'a disrelish more powerful than indifference' would sweep over Byron—an invincible emotional fatigue. All the crises of the past, every hour of tedium and disillusionment and remorse, weighed in the scales against her. He yielded—and, as many another man has done, gave the name of duty to what was chiefly weariness.

'What could I do? On one hand to sacrifice a woman whom I loved, for life; leaving her destitute and divided from all ties in case of my death; on the other hand to give up an *amicizia* which had been my pleasure, my pride and my passion. At twenty I should have taken her away, at thirty, with the experience of *ten such years*!—I sacrificed myself only; and counselled and persuaded her, with the greatest difficulty, to return with her husband to Ravenna.'[81]

So Teresa, after all, was sent home again with her husband. She went, she tells us, only because she felt certain that Byron would soon follow her—and he himself wrote that he had given her a half-promise, 'else she refused to go'.*

And now Byron was again alone—'in a gloomy Venetian palace . . . unhappy in the retrospect, and at least as much so in the prospect'.[82] The alternatives, indeed, were not attractive. On the one hand—if, after all, he stayed in Italy—he would be obliged to take up for good the too familiar duties and pleasures of a Cavalier Servente—or, still worse, to find himself responsible for the destruction of Teresa's marriage, and be saddled with her for life! But on the other hand, if

* This promise appears to have been known even by the Austrian police, for a report dated November 25th says: 'Byron, in order to calm the amorous agitation of Signora Guiccioli, who refused to leave him, promised to return to see her in Ravenna; but his only real intention is to return to England.' *Carte segrete della polizia austriaca in Italia*, p. 207.

he went back to England—what would lie before him? 'I return to England with a heavier heart than when I left it; with no prospects of pleasure or comfort.'[83]

He wrote to Teresa in one mood, to his friends in England in another. To Teresa he said:

'You are and ever will be my first thought. But at the moment I am in a most dreadful state, not knowing which way to decide—on the one hand, fearing to compromise you for ever by my return to Ravenna and the consequences of such a step, and, on the other, dreading to lose both you and myself, and all that I have ever known or tasted of happiness, by never seeing you more. I beg you, I implore you, to calm yourself, and to believe that I can only cease to love you, with my life. . . .'*

To Kinnaird, however, he was writing: 'I shall quit Italy. I have done my duty, but the country has become sad to me; I feel alone in it; and as I left England on account of my own wife, I now quit Italy for the wife of another.'[84]

As soon, however, as he had made up his mind, an unexpected contretemps delayed him. Allegra fell ill, and kind Dr. Aglietti informed him that it was the *doppia terzana*—a peculiarly virulent form of malaria. 'The poor child has the fever *daily*,' he wrote, 'all my plans . . . are lulled upon the feverish pillow of a sick infant.'[85]

Dr. Aglietti was assiduous in his care of the child, and on November 25th wrote to Byron that he now considered her well enough to travel, and that, if she followed his prescriptions, she would recover her health completely in England. At the same time he asked Byron whether he would arrange for him to receive some English books, in exchange for Italian ones, from Murray, and bade him farewell, 'with the most sincere feelings of esteem, gratitude and attachment'.[86]

* This passage and another paragraph beginning 'I go to save you' are quoted by Moore (II, p. 288) as belonging to the same letter, and very possibly Teresa told him that it was so. But their content certainly suggests that they belonged to *two* letters; the first written before he had made up his mind, and the second after. The originals are not in the Gamba Papers; I have translated them from the Italian text in Moore.

Fanny, meanwhile, was sitting in Allegra's playroom and writing to Byron a note in which she offered him her services, to accompany him as far as Calais and look after the child on the journey. She promised to 'fulfil towards her all the duties of a mother', as a token 'of the sentiments of esteem, gratitude and affection that I nourish for you, Mylord'.[87] The proposal, it is hardly necessary to state, was not accepted.

Byron, however, still held to his decision; 'in Italy I will not remain a moment longer than enables me to quit it'.[88] And on November 25th he was writing Teresa a final letter of farewell.[89]

'I go *to save you,* and to leave a country which, without you, has become insupportable. Your letters to F[anny] and even to me do wrong to my motives—but in time you will see your injustice. You speak of grief; I feel it, but words fail me. Is it not enough that I must leave you—for motives of which you yourself were convinced not long ago—is it not enough that I must leave Italy, with a deeply wounded heart, after having passed all my days since your departure in solitude, sick in body and mind—but I must also have to endure your reproaches, without replying, and without deserving them. Farewell!—in that one word is comprised the death of my happiness.'[90]

It was at this time that he composed the lines which, three years later, he showed to Lady Blessington.

Could love for ever
Run like a river,
And Time's endeavour
Be tried in vain—
No other pleasure
With this could measure;
And as a treasure
We'd hug the chain.
But since our sighing
Ends not in dying,
And, formed for flying,
Love plumes his wing;

Then for this reason
Let's love a season;
But let that season be only Spring.

When lovers parted
Feel broken-hearted,
And, all hopes thwarted,
Expect to die;
A few years older,
Ah! how much colder
They might behold her
For whom they sigh!!
When linked together
In every weather
They pluck Love's feather
From out his wing,
He'll sadly shiver
And droop for ever
Shorn of the plumage which sped his Spring. . . .

Wait not, fond lover!
Till years are over,
And then recover
As from a dream;
While each bewailing
The other's failing,
With wrath and railing
All hideous seem;
While first decreasing
Yet not quite ceasing
Wait not till teasing
All passion blight:
If once diminished
Love's reign is finished—
One last embrace then, and bid good-night!!

Before showing these lines to Lady Blessington, Byron remarked, speaking of marriage, that 'there was no real happi-

ness to be found out of its pale. "If people like each other so well", said he, "as not to be able to live asunder, this is the only tie that can ensure happiness—all others entail misery." ' Lady Blessington pointed out that these sentiments were somewhat at variance with those expressed in the poem. 'He laughed and said, "Recollect, the lines were written nearly four years ago; and we grow wiser as we grow older; but mind, I still stay that I can only approve marriage when the persons are so much attached as not to be able to live asunder, which ought always to be tried by a year's absence before the irrevocable knot is formed." '[91]

Teresa's own opinion of these verses is sufficiently revealed in the following letter to John Murray:

'The song *Could Love for ever* was written at a moment of great moral and bodily suffering— when he [Lord Byron] wanted to take *the resolution* to leave Italy. This step, which he thought his duty to take, costed him (*sic*) the greatest sacrifice of feelings—and he wrote such verses (as occasionally he did in different circumstances) not for *publication* but only for relieving his mind and give himself the strength he wanted but which he could not find, though in the very day and hour in which they were written he was under the influence of a periodical fever—a circumstance which may sufficiently explain the indifference of such a composition, which he esteemed so unworthy of being published, that he threw it among other useless papers in a corner of his room, where having been found by chance and finally given to the public.'[92]

But, for all this, November passed into December—and Byron was still in Venice. The more he thought about his return to England, the less assured he felt about his welcome. Would even his friends be glad to see him? Would the scene in Lady Jersey's drawing-room be repeated?

He did not, in any case, propose to *remain* in England; perhaps, after all, he would carry out his South American scheme, or go to the Cape, 'if I don't take a much longer voyage'.[93] But meanwhile he and little Allegra must stay

somewhere. 'I have nobody to receive me but my sister' . . . but would Augusta really want him?

His doubts were even better founded than he knew. When Augusta did at last receive his letter, stating that 'I expect to be in or near England by the New Year', and asking her to send him 'a line at Calais',[94] she was overcome by dismay.

'Luckily (or *un*luckily perhaps) I don't die easily, or I think this stroke would about finish me.' She hurried to send on Byron's letter to Annabella, asking for her advice. 'I'm sure I don't know how to address a letter to *Calais*—it being out of the question to *give him welcome* to England.'[95] A prompt reply came back to her from Lady Byron:

'The reasons which, a short time since, induced you to deliberate whether you ought to continue the correspondence . . . have infinitely more weight in the question whether any personal interview is admissible . . . Several of his letters . . . demonstrate that he has not relinquished his criminal *desires*, and I think I may add designs. It can scarcely be doubted, from the whole series of his correspondence, that you are his principal object in England . . . Consider then for yourself, whether it would be advisable to apprize him at Calais of the impossibility of your consenting to personal intercourse.'[96]

All this, however, fortunately, Byron did not know—and he continued his preparations for departure. It appears to have been common knowledge in Venice that he had promised Teresa, if he could not follow her to Ravenna, to save her face by leaving the country altogether, for Alexander Scott, who had heard the story from the bookseller Missiaglia, wrote from Milan to Byron to expostulate:

'When I received this letter, I had just finished reading a chapter of Machiavelli, entitled, "In che modo i Principi debbono osservare la fede"—and though I am a Scotchman and had a religious education and am very well disposed to observe any promises on such occasions, I confess, I was not a little startled at the idea of one setting out on a long journey in Winter in order to keep one's promise. In said chapter M[achiavelli] discussing the qualities of the Lion and the

Fox that ought to compound a prince, observes . . . "Non può pertanto un Signore prudente, né debbe, osservare la fede quando tale sua osservanza gli torni contro, e che sono spente le cagioni che la fecero promettere." Now I suppose your motives for promising were, to persuade the Countess to go quietly home and to win your wager, and these ends being obtained, there can be no occasion for your keeping your promise before the end of the winter.'*

But for once Byron did not seem disposed to accept such counsels—and Fanny Silvestrini, in reply to Teresa's despairing requests for news, could find no better comfort than to suggest that, after all, Mylord's determination to leave Italy was, since he could not be near her, his last tribute to her power.[97]

Mylord is leaving Venice, is abandoning Italy, is crossing the mountains and the sea in such a bitter season, is going to England for you, only for you,—so as not to cause you to wonder whether his not coming to Ravenna, yet still remaining in Italy or abroad, has reasons unrelated to you—and this is your great triumph. He, however, assures me, and charges me to assure you in his name, that if you continue to feel the same sentiment for him, and desire it, he is prepared to return here from London, only to see you, as he is leaving only for your sake. . . .

Do not doubt, Teresina, that you will have news of Mylord by every post, as far as I can gather it during his journey. Calm yourself, for pity's sake. Think of your health, which is dear to Mylord, I vow it, Teresina. Do not believe you have been deceived, he would not ever be capable of deceiving you; he has always been swayed by your will . . . But after all, what use is it going over the past? Do not heed the present too much, but give a great deal of thought to the

* December 18th, 1819. Unpublished letter belonging to Sir John Murray. The quotation is from Machiavelli's *Principe*, chapter XVIII. 'A prudent Prince cannot, therefore, and should not, keep his word, when to keep it is against his interests, and when the reasons that made him give it, have ceased to exist.'

future. I am writing from my heart, and no one can be a better friend to you than I.

I enclose a card of invitation that Mylord had from the Benzone. He, with dry courtesy, sent her his thanks and a message that in a few days he was leaving Venice. For all the gold in the world he would not have gone there, nor to any other place of amusement. He will go out of his house only to leave Venice, as he promised you; nor has he ever done so, everyone can testify to it . . . My Dear, B[yron] is taking Valeriano with him, as well as many of his other servants, and when he gets to Calais he will send him back with news, from him you will be able to hear about the journey, and from him too you will receive his letters, this will also be a slight consolation. I will close, impatient to hear that you are a little calmer. My Friend, Farewell again.

At the bottom of this letter two brief lines from Byron are all that he could find to say.

My Love: At the moment—it is impossible for me to write in detail—but in time you will realize that I am and always shall be yours.

At last the date of his departure came, and once again it is Fanny who describes the scene:

'He was already dressed for the journey, his gloves and cap on, and even his little cane in his hand. Nothing was now waited for but his coming downstairs—his boxes being already on board the gondola. At this moment Mylord, by way of pretext, declares that if it would strike one o'clock before everything was in order (his arms being the only thing not yet quite ready) he would not go that day. The hour strikes and he remains. Evidently he had not the heart to go.'[98]

Within the next few days, an English post arrived which was certainly not calculated to increase his desire to return to his native land. No word from any of his friends; no word from Augusta; but, forwarded by John Murray—a copy of

Blackwood's *Edinburgh Magazine* for August, containing—on the pretext of a review of the first two Cantos of *Don Juan*, to which it referred as a 'filthy and impious poem'—a virulent attack upon his private life. 'For impurities there might be some possibility of pardon . . . for impiety there might at least be pity . . . but for offences such as this . . . which speak the wilful and determined spite of an unrepenting, unsoftened, smiling, sarcastic, joyous sinner—for such diabolical, such slavish vice, there can be neither pity nor pardon.'[99]

'Such outrageous license', commented Byron to Murray, 'is overdone and defeats itself.'[100] But the trouble was, that not only feelings were at stake. Murray wanted to apply to the Lord Chancellor for a copyright for *Don Juan*—but, Byron warned him, 'You will recollect that if the publication is pronounced against, on the grounds you mention, as *indecent* and *blasphemous*, that *I* lose all right in my daughter's *guardianship* and *education* . . . It was so decided in Shelley's case'.[101]

All this brought back to Byron the recollection of all that he most hated, most had reason to dread, in England. Why should he, after all, return to 'a country where I neither like nor am liked'?

And while he was still uncertain, Teresa played her trump card. Exhausted by all she had been through, by the rapid passage from joy to despair, from freedom to renewed imprisonment—unutterably bored in the grim solitude of Palazzo Guiccioli, with her husband even more embittered and suspicious than before—uncertain, above all, whether she would ever, once he had crossed the Alps, see her lover again,—she had another serious relapse. It is not necessary to wonder, as some of Byron's biographers have done, whether this illness was merely a pretext to recall her lover. Many of the Gambas had consumptive tendencies—and this is, of all illnesses, the one most easily revived by distress and anxiety of mind. Teresa's attack was so serious that her whole family became alarmed. Her father hastened to her bedside—and, while admitting that unhappiness over Byron's departure was

the chief cause of her relapse, she succeeded in persuading him that their relations were still platonic, and that there was no reason why Lord Byron should not come, 'Like anyone else, to spend the winter in Ravenna—and to be near the sea and the fine pine-forest which he loved so well.'[102]

Was the Count wholly convinced? We shall never know. What is certain is that he yielded to his daughter's persuasions—re-enforced by her illness and her tears—and wrote to Byron as she requested. 'Her father (who had, all along, opposed the *liaison* most violently till now) wrote to me to say that *he* begged me to come and see her—and that her husband had acquiesced, in consequence of her relapse.'*

So at last Byron reached a decision. To Augusta (no doubt to her great relief) he wrote: 'The health of my daughter Allegra, the cold season, and the length of the journey, induce me to postpone for some time a purpose (never very willing on my part) to revisit Great Britain.'[103] To Murray: 'I have changed my mind, and shall not come to England. The more I contemplate, the more I dislike the place and the prospect.'[104] And to Kinnaird: 'I shall go again to Ravenna; anything better than England.'[105]

But to Teresa, in Ravenna, he wrote the letter for which, in all these weary weeks, she had been waiting.

F[anny] will have told you, *with her usual sublimity*, that Love has wor I have not been able to find enough resolution to leave the country where you are, without seeing you at least once more·—perhaps it will depend on *you* whether I ever again shall leave you. Of the rest we shall speak. You should now know what is more conducive to your welfare, my presence or my absence I am a citizen of the world—all countries are alike to me. You have always been (since we met) *the only object of my thoughts*. I believed that the best

* *L J., IV,* p. 396 To Moore, dated January 2nd, 1820. The world's opinion is recorded for us by Rangone: 'The complaisant husband seemed disposed to make a complete break, but a loan, procured through his wife's good offices, produced a reversal of feeling,—and the Cavaliere went quietly to stay with Mylord and his own wife, and then took them both home.'

course, both for your peace and for that of your family, was for me to leave, and to go *very far away*; for to remain near and *not* approach you, would have been impossible for me. But you have decided that I am to return to Ravenna. I shall return—and do—and be—what you wish. I cannot say more.[106]

On Christmas Eve Byron—welcomed with infinite joy by Teresa and with great cordiality by all her relations—was once again in Ravenna.

4: RAVENNA AGAIN

> Brunello is his name that hath the ring,
> Most lewd and false, but politike and wise.
> (ARIOSTO, 'Orlando Furioso', translated
> by Sir John Harington)

'It will depend on you', Byron had written to Teresa, 'whether I ever again shall leave you' Little did he know, as he wrote those words, how true they would prove. 'I have not decided anything', he wrote to Hoppner in January, 'about remaining at Ravenna. I may stay a day, a week, a year, all my life, but all this depends upon what I can neither see nor foresee. I came because I was called, and will go the moment that I perceive what may render my departure proper. My attachment has neither the blindness of the beginning, nor the microscopic accuracy of the close to such *liaisons*, but "time and the hour" must decide upon what I do.'[1]

Yet, however much he might try to preserve—in the sight of others, and even in his own—an illusion of freedom, Byron's return to Ravenna had been the turning-point. The moment when he handed Teresa over to her husband in Venice had been the last one at which, as he himself soon came to realize, he could decently have made a break with her, henceforth he was committed. On his first public appearance in Ravenna, at a party on New Year's Eve, in the house of Teresa's uncle, Marchese Cavalli, where 'there were between two and three hundred of the best company I have seen in Italy', he found himself welcomed by the whole of Teresa's family as one of themselves.

'The G.'s object appeared to be to parade her foreign lover as much as possible, and, faith, if she seemed to glory in the Scandal, it was not for me to be ashamed of it. Nobody seemed surprised;—all the women, on the contrary, were, as it were, delighted with the excellent example. The Vice

Legate, and all the other Vices, were as polite as could be;—and I, who had acted on the reserve, was fairly obliged to take the lady under my arm, and look as much like a Cicisbeo as I could on so short a notice.'[2]

'He was received', says Teresa in the 'Vie', 'with the greatest cordiality, like a friend who has come home again.'[3] She says that the party was the first assembly of the season—it being then the custom in Ravenna for the families of the nobility to join an association, whose members held the assemblies of the year in turn, during Advent and Lent, in their respective houses. The first party of each year was given in the house of the most recent bride,—who, in this case, happened to be Teresa's cousin, the young Marchesa Clelia Cavalli*—and the hostess then decided who her successor should be on the following night. There were refreshments, cards and conversation, and the young people danced in the adjoining room.[4]

All this mild provincial life was very entertaining—for a while. The cage was charmingly gilded, and now Teresa expected her tame poet to sing in it. She says of him that 'il voyait tout en beau,'—except the inn in which he was lodged, although it was the best in the town. He attempted to find lodgings elsewhere but failed—and 'it was then', says Teresa, 'that Count Guiccioli offered him the apartment on the first floor of his *palazzo*'—while the Guicciolis themselves remained on the ground floor.

'After some hesitation, and probably even encouraged and

* It was in honour of this lady that Byron—'repeatedly urged to do so by the Countess G.'—had written a sonnet; assuredly with his tongue in his cheek.

'A noble Lady of the Italian shore
Lovely and young, herself a happy bride,
Commands a verse and will not be denied . . .
A sweeter language and a luckier bard
Were worthier of your hopes, Auspicious Pair!
But—since I cannot but obey the Fair,
To render your new state your true reward
May your fate be like *Hers* and unlike *Mine*!

Ravenna, July 31st, 1819.

urged by the Countess, Lord Byron accepted. 'Certainly,' Teresa adds, 'the offer might appear strange. It was so, indeed, but people were accustomed to consider the Count *an eccentric,* and after a few days they stopped talking about it.'*

But Teresa can hardly have believed this herself—or expected us to believe it. They went on talking, and have indeed been doing so ever since. In *I Guiccioli* the arrangement is explained as being part of a deliberate scheme of Teresa's husband, 'while in the depths of his heart his plans were maturing', to discover what his wife's relationship with Byron really was. 'For while in public nothing transpired on his impassive countenance, he exercised a secret and untiring espionage.'[5]

'The world', Teresa said in a later statement to her lawyers, 'talked a great deal and my father was upset, but Guiccioli found it to his own advantage; and so Lord Byron entered our house and was there constantly and confidentially in our company—Guiccioli even asking Mylord to take me to the Theatre in public, so as to be free to pursue his own amusements.'[6] 'Lord Byron thus became what was called her Cavalier Servente, a position which', so Teresa affirmed, 'did not in the least expose him to criticism, since it was allied, or could be allied, to the most immaculate and respected reputation of all three people concerned.'[7]

As to public opinion in Ravenna, it is again recorded by Rangone: 'The respected Lord looked for an apartment, but, finding none, accepted the noble suggestion of the Cavaliere to come and stay in his own house to square their accounts. And so dogs, monkeys, house-servants, a little girl—said to be his offspring by a girl in London—and Mylord, took up their abode in this most delightful new inn . . .' Lord became an accomplished Cavalier; he took a box at the theatre for himself and his household, gave a gratuity to the impresario, was

* 'Vie', p. 395. Byron's inn, although bearing the name of 'Imperiale', was indeed of the most modest description, consisting only of six rooms. These he afterwards used for his servants.

generous on benefit nights, distributed money to the poor, helped the suffering—in fact, made himself popular with everyone.'[8]

Whatever may have been the Count's motives in coming to this arrangement, that of Teresa and Byron requires no elucidation. But, in spite of this favourable beginning, the next few months were not a happy period.

'Lord Byron', Teresa herself admitted, 'began to play his role [of Cavalier Servente] with pleasure, indeed, but not without laughing at it a little . . . One would almost have thought that he was a little ashamed—that in showing himself kind he was making an avowal of weakness and being deficient in that virility of soul which he admired so much . . . This', she firmly added, 'was a great fault of Lord Byron's.'*

Besides, daily life in the Palazzo Guiccioli was far from smooth. Here they were again under the same roof—but how uneasily the time passed, compared with those golden autumn days at La Mira! Now they were dependent for their few snatched hours together on anxious stolen meetings during the Count's siesta, or on the nights when he went to the theatre or to a Conversazione without his wife. Sometimes the Count was suave and courteous, sometimes curt and morose. But always, in the background, his presence made itself felt—formidable, inscrutable, perpetually observant.

When the two lovers could not meet, they wrote to each other—hasty, scribbled notes, carried from one floor of the palazzo to the other by Teresa's maid or one of the negro pages.† Many of these notes concern a series of quarrels—of

* 'Vie', p. 353 An Italian sonnet of the period gives a portrait of a typical *cavalier servente*:

Femmina di costumi e di maniere
E di esercizi sol maschio e di sesso,
Non marito, non celibe, ma spesso
L'uno e l'altro per genio e per mestiere.
Supplemento diurno il cui dovere
E' di star sempre all'altrui moglie appresso,
Ed ha per patto e complemento espresso
Noiarsi insieme le giornate intiere. . . .

CLEMENTE BONDI (1742-1821)

† One of these pages—Teresa's messenger—came from East Africa;

which the causes, seen at a distance, are extremely slight: the dismissal of a maid, Teresa's jealousy of Geltrude Vicari, Byron's jealousy of an old friend, Teresa's childish resentment because Byron failed to sit beside her the whole evening during her game of cards. There are references, too, to disagreements between Byron and his host: on one occasion about a carriage and some furniture which Byron had ordered from Florence; on another about the engagement of a celebrated prima donna at the opera. All this seems very trivial, but Byron's letters to Teresa reveal something rather different from the usual reproaches, fair or unfair, of an angry lover. They show, first of all, a growing uneasiness about Teresa's character. Byron was under no illusion about his own weaknesses, but disingenuousness was not one of them, and it is plain that Teresa's lack of frankness caused him much disquiet. He complained that he could not 'extract a word of truth' from her; he implored her to behave in a manner 'unequivocal, even in appearances'. Her lack of sincerity distressed him so much that he tried to find excuses for it by considering it, not as an individual, but a national, trait. He wrote of 'the sincerity that unfortunately cannot exist in the present conditions of Italian morals —of social morals fatal to a foreigner who loves an Italian woman'.

It appears probable that the Puritan in Byron—'the little Scottish Calvinist',—as Maurois said—'who never lost his respect for purity'—felt more than a little uncomfortable in the situation in which he now found himself. He minded it, precisely in proportion to the depth of his feelings for Teresa. It was not only that he was, as Teresa herself admits, 'a little ashamed' of his role of Cavalier Servente. What must have been even more disquieting was something at which it is only possible to guess, and which the letters—though they hint at it—never explicitly state. This was Teresa's very

the other, who was faithful to Guiccioli, from the coast of Guinea. Both wore 'rich oriental costumes, with pistols and daggers at their belt'. *I Guiccioli*, I, p. 68.

curious relationship with her husband. I think the evidence in these letters, in Teresa's subsequent statements to her lawyers and to her parish priest, in her step-children's letters to her later on, and in her own family's attitude to the whole question of her separation, points to something very unpleasant in Guiccioli's influence over her. Moreover, this hold, which was founded on cold-blooded calculation, seems to have been exceedingly strong; at the time of Byron's return to Ravenna, she had not by any means shaken it off.

From the available evidence it would seem that in the early days of the liaison, when Guiccioli was still hoping to gain some advantages, in prosperity or prestige, from Byron's friendship, he gave Teresa every reason to believe that he would cause no trouble—and that when, after La Mira, she was presented with a definite choice, she was not only distressed, but completely taken aback. As to Byron's return to Ravenna, a very curious sidelight is thrown on it by the following sentence in one of his letters. 'All this would already be over', he tells Teresa, 'if that man [Guiccioli] had allowed me to leave in December of last year. He not only *wished me to come*—but he said to me with his own lips that I ought not to go away—this being too far-fetched a remedy.'

In the face of such a statement, is it not permissible to suppose that, when Guiccioli offered Byron an apartment in his house for the *second* time (the first was at Bologna) Teresa had reason to think that all might again go smoothly?[9] She only gradually came to realize that her husband was playing a very tortuous game—on the one hand trying to see of how much use the English Mylord could be to him—but on the other, spying on the lovers, so that, if he decided that a separation would suit his books better, he would have the necessary evidence to get rid of her. But, as she began to realize all this, Teresa must have been in a very difficult position indeed. That she really loved Byron is indisputable, and that at any moment she would have been willing to throw everything else overboard for him. But this correspondence

shows that she had every reason to doubt whether Byron wanted matters to come to that point.

In this dilemma Teresa must have attempted, at least in the first months of this year, to conciliate her alarming, inscrutable husband until, as we shall see, he tried to make her ask Byron for another loan—at which point she stood firm, with considerable courage. But in smaller matters, she would sometimes give Byron an impression of complicity with Alessandro against him. This is, I think, the most probable explanation of the underlying note of tormented uneasiness in Byron's letters. There must have been moments in which, in this foreign country, this strange society, caught up in these unfamiliar conventions, he felt himself completely at sea—and when it must have seemed to him that Teresa, too, was on the other side.

The next two letters, written only a few days after Byron's arrival in Ravenna, were enclosed in a folder on which Teresa has written:

'Two very unjust notes, caused by

1. my having taken and kept in my service a maid who, he had been told, was not respectable, and whom Count G. wished to keep near me to spy on me.
2. my having received and conversed in a familiar manner with an old family friend (aged 60) Count R * * * who had always treated me as a daughter, and
3. my having suggested that a woman friend, who had been dear to me in the past, was rather flighty, and, above all, that she had tender feelings for him.'

About the first accusation Teresa added later on that Shortly before taking possession of his apartment in Palazzo Guiccioli, Lord Byron had learned that one of the maids was an intriguing woman who had always caused trouble in every house where she had been'. In addition he believed that Guiccioli was keeping this maid in the house as his own mistress, and to spy upon Teresa.

'Lord Byron begged his friend to send her away . . . The

Countess did so, but the Count, hearing that she had done so on Byron's advice, insisted on the woman's remaining; and expressed his will as master of the house, in a manner wounding both to Lord Byron and the Countess.'[10]

Byron's feelings on the subject were so strong, that he even at first refused to enter Palazzo Guiccioli until the maid, whom he referred to as 'Teresa the Second', had left it; and indeed he did not move there until the end of January—although without having gained his point.

As to the lady mentioned in the third accusation—Geltrude Vicari—Byron's high moral tone about her, though possibly justified in regard to this particular incident, is slightly invalidated by a letter of his to Augusta, in the previous summer:

'I fell a little in love with her intimate friend—a certain Geltruda (that is, Gertrude) who is very young and seems very well disposed to be perfidious—but, alas!—*her* husband is jealous—and the G. also detected me in an illicit squeezing of hands—in consequence of which the friend was whisked off to Bologna for a few days—and since her return I have never been able to see her but twice—with a dragon of a mother-in-law and a barbarous husband by her side—besides my own dear precious Amica who hates all flirting but her own.—But I have a Priest who befriends me—and the Geltrude says a good deal with her great black eyes, so that perhaps—'[11]

Perhaps Teresa was not so unjustified in her jealousy, after all!

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

January 3rd, 1820

My Friend: You must do as you think best—I have not dictated what you should do—I replied when you reproached me for calling on the Vicari,—'that it was less improper for me to visit your most intimate friend than for you to retain in your house a woman like Teresa, kept for so many years, for ***one reason***—and now—according to all appearances—for ***another.***

If you had not begun by reproaching me about a most innocent matter, I should have gone away without saying a single word on the subject. Nevertheless I now believe, as I always have believed—from outward signs—from what I have suspected—and heard—that that woman and her former lover have deceived you for their own purposes.

The familiarities of that man may be innocent—but decent they are not—even this evening, when you thought I was reading the manuscript that A[lessandro] put into my hands, I observed, by the fire, certain things that do not suit me. You will know well enough what I mean, without my saying any more.*

You would have done better to let me go away from you before I came here; since my arrival I have enjoyed pleasures that only you can give me—but on the other hand I have suffered very much in seeing you, in my opinion, either degraded or weak. There is a mystery about these things that I cannot understand;—a morality without principle—a love without faith—and a friendship without esteem or trust—these have unfortunately shown themselves lately to such a degree that it has been impossible for me to extract a word of truth from a person for whom I have given up everything.

If you can reconcile your code as a lady with your defence of the aforesaid woman who is now in your service; if you can reconcile your love for me with the liberties you have permitted to another man in my presence; and your most sincere (or most affected) friendship with the Vicari with the way in which you spoke of her to me tonight- -I shall admit that you are a lady of great gifts—but no longer my friend.

Your A[lessandro] accused me this evening of indecision. *He* accused *me*—very fine! *He*, after all the scenes in Venice—all his plans to travel to Vienna—to Florence—to change his country—to send his sons to school, then to England—to

* Teresa, in her note about this letter, wished to make the future reader believe that this accusation referred to a family friend; but subsequent letters make it seem probable that Byron meant Count Guiccioli.

break off your relationship—really, that is fine! What does he want? That I, a foreigner, far from my own country and from the manners and customs and ways of thought and behaviour of my fellow-countrymen—that I should decide things for the people of another land!

Since I have known you I have lived *for you*—and *with you*—is this indecision? If I see my country in danger of destruction—some of my friends arrested—others on the point of being involved in civil war—my family without support—much of my property none too safe—in the conditions prevalent under this insecure government—if in such a moment it seems to you or to others that I am upset—does this deserve the name of indecision?—For I must consider that I have left everything in such a state—for a woman who not only does not love me,—but never . . . [page torn and a line missing] . . . loved.—I cannot deny your gifts and your beauty; you write eloquent notes, in your physical attributes you are . . . all that one can desire . . . [the page is torn and the rest of the letter is missing.]

January 4th, 1820

In reply to your letter of this morning, I can only say that we do not understand each other. If you had not reproached me for paying a brief and most unimportant call on a friend of yours, very dear to you six months ago—and as I believe still dear *now*—I should never have thought of mentioning what seemed to me little to your credit, in a well-ordered household. For the rest I cannot be the bearer of your communications to C.R. either for good or evil, and I will not in any way enter into the affairs of those two creatures. As to receiving people in your house—why not everybody?—then it would have no importance. Meanwhile, it would matter little to me who comes or goes, if you showed the sincerity that unfortunately cannot exist in your circumstances, in the present state of Italian morals. Only I should like to tell you that when you give such a gracious and friendly welcome to your friend, it is difficult for me to guess that in that very

moment you are hating her most. I have nothing more to say about this hardly pleasant subject.

I am very sorry to hear that you have not felt well this evening, and I hope that tomorrow you will be better.

I have been with Lega to the Bacinetti apartment, of which I do not think the accommodation convenient—the position I like—but in those quarters it would be impossible for me to live with my family—without almost rebuilding the house.

Pray believe that I feel as I have always felt towards you—and do not attribute unworthy motives to me—such as trying 'to test you'. I say what I feel; I have not come here for such trivial reasons. I do not put great faith in a fine style, nor in eloquent notes—which no one can do better than you—but in honest deeds, in sincerity—with women as with men friends– and in a conduct which is unequivocal even in appearances. I am etc. etc.*

6 *o'clock*—[no date, but as it enclosed the preceding note, it must be January 4th.]

I wrote you the enclosed letter before receiving yours—Lega having returned only this moment from the port. This will confirm my feelings and my resolution, which was and is unalterable.

Anyway T[eresa]† will not lose much (except your good graces, which I would mind losing much more than she would). As to her interests, I will do all that can be done until she finds another place and will do so very willingly. I am not seeking *vengeance*—or to cause pain—but only that that woman should not be near you, not only for [your] sake and mine, but for all the other people you know. I have given orders to Lega—he will see to everything.

'You say that A[lessandro] told you that I "did not love

* In the whole of this letter Byron uses the formal *voi* instead of the intimate *tu*.

† The name of the maid whom Byron wished to be dismissed, was also Teresa.

you ". I do not know what he means, but I know that I said to his face—that even if he did not want you, I was *fond of you* and would be *for ever.* Can one say more to a husband? As to the rest—you know whether I *loved* you—and how—and how much—even in the last and greatest troubles—and *oppressed with fever*—I was your lover—as I shall be on my deathbed, at least while I have the same strength in me.'*

'I will come.[12] I think I have done justice to those qualities which really are yours—and as to the faults I have told you about (perhaps with too much frankness) you have those in common with a whole nation—and with social morals fatal to a foreigner who loves an Italian woman.'

January 10th, 1820

My love: Pray explain what A[lessandro] said this evening about the membership for the assemblies—I don't understand very well—the thing may be a Romagnole politeness or a discourtesy. I most certainly should not have become a member myself, if the presence of Alessandro and of Cristino R. had not reassured me as I was doing it. In any case I consider myself at least the equal of the members as to *birth,* which is not within our control, and also as to everything else, which is. Pray instruct me for my guidance—for I do not want to demean myself—not even for your sake,—but in all that you desire (feeling certain that you would not desire anything that could mortify your friend) I am and always shall be yours (as you say) *eternally.*

P.S. I vow I should vastly prefer not to go to these assemblies—and only thought of going because you wished it.[13]

Forgive this Inn's paper[14]

My Love: I am sorry that I cannot go with you—but I am

* This letter consists of two fragments, which have been cut out of a longer letter. They bear no date, but are enclosed in a folder on which is written (in another handwriting than Teresa's) 'January 3rd and 4th, 1820'. On the back of the letter is written in Byron's own hand: 'This was the postscript to my last letter—but I did not send it.'

not feeling well this evening—and then this removal requires my own particular attention—which you will understand well enough, knowing the character of my people. I am thinking of coming to you in a few minutes, but I do not want you to give up the Conversazione of C[lelia] C[avalli] on my account. I am

It was at about this time that two letters from Venice recalled to Byron's memory the existence of Fanny Silvestrini, who, from the moment that she ceased to be of use to him, was regarded by him with increasing distaste. It appears that 'that chaste lady, Madame Lega' (the expression is Hoppner's) had been sent by Byron to Hoppner with a message about the forwarding of his furniture. To Hoppner—no longer able to express his disapproval directly to Byron himself—this was a godsent opportunity, and he first, as he admitted in a letter to Byron, refused to receive the lady at all, and then kept her waiting for some hours in a cold hall.

'If I could have believed', wrote Fanny, 'that he could be so indiscreet and absolutely uncivil to me, I should indeed have spared myself the trouble of waiting unnecessarily in a very cold waiting-room, on the ground floor and without a chair, in icy cold, tired from the long walk, and in my present condition. Nevertheless I returned the next day at the time he condescended to establish, and he received me, standing, in the same room, without greeting me either when I came or went, and hardly condescending to tell me that he would see to everything; but I assure you, Mylord, with an air and a tone that you, Mylord, would certainly not have used with the least of your servants.

I cannot see the reason of such behaviour towards me. You, who have always shown so much goodness towards me, then came into my mind, and the comparison rendered odious to me the temporary presence of the most inurbane Mr. Opner.'[15]

Fanny did not add that, while Hoppner was still upstairs, she—according to Hoppner's account—'bounced into our

drawing-room, saying she was not accustomed to be kept waiting in a hall, and I understand was so angry at my usage, that she actually tore her veil!'[16]

Byron and Teresa were both far too much preoccupied with their own affairs to pay much attention to this story. Byron's next letters refer to further disagreements between him and his host.

January 17th, 1820

My Love: Elisei has confirmed what you said about the 'prima donna'* in connection with me, but was already convinced that it was not true—and I asked him once more, warmly, to contradict that bit of gossip everywhere—and he promised to, very gladly.

I have not seen Giulio Rasponi—when I do I shall say the same thing to him too. I did not come to see you, because you had gone out calling, and then A[lessandro] did not find the key of the box—so what was to be done? Do you want me to come at 6 or not—and how shall I behave with regard to the assembly? A[lessandro] seemed to me in a bad humour. Believe that I am in *deeds* what you are in *words*—
Your *'lover for ever'*

Yes—and *if not*—I will pay the journey here—and back to F[lorence] with something more for their pains—but I wish to reserve for myself the right to refuse, in case the landau does not correspond to the description. A[lessandro] is a buffoon—who does not know what he wants or says when he is in a raging temper. Tell him so.[17]

[page torn] 31*st*, 1820[18]

You have heard your father talk about that woman—and if

* The 'prima donna' was Mme Pasta and it was about her engagement that Byron had quarrelled with Count Guiccioli. According to Teresa, Byron had expressed to Guiccioli—who was at the head of the Ravenna Theatre Committee—a warm admiration for the talent of Mme Pasta, and had undertaken to contribute two hundred pounds sterling for her engagement. See also Byron's letter of March 30th.

you will not listen to him or to your friend, it is enough to listen to the town. She has caused trouble in every household where she has been.

I asked Ferdinando to whisper in *your ear*—perhaps he misunderstood.

The other evening I gave you my *word of honour* not to go into any house where that woman is—and in my country this counts for more than an oath. As to the rest—everyone is master in his own house, and no one more than A[lessandro]. He will do what he likes and will be right. I have told *you* —even in the presence of Count Ruggero. Do you think there is any difference of opinion between us about your defence of this woman? Ask him.

I am not trying to humiliate anyone—but neither your honour nor mine will allow me to be silent when I see things to which I will not give their *real* name, so as not to use words which might offend you. The imprudence of Ferdinando was my fault,—in part—but I had no other way at the time of communicating with you—and I thought he would tell you at a more suitable moment what was only repeating a resolution already taken and explained a long time ago.

My intention was not to offend either A[lessandro] or anyone, but I do not regret having done everything possible at any cost—to prevent the continuance of an imprudence which would have ended dishonourably.

One must do what one must—and not only what is agreeable—and this I have done. I am and shall be your most humble servant and friend.

7 *o'clock*

My Love: It is difficult to foresee how this affair may end. In any case you can always be certain of my most sincere, my most passionate love. You are in a position to know better than I what A[lessandro's] ideas are. I have sent Lega to tell him that neither Papa nor the Rasponi had spoken to me or sent me a message about the matter—as is the case.

Of the woman I retain my opinion and my resolution—

since the reasons are constantly increasing against my entering any house inhabited by this fine Helen of the new Trojan war. You know that the name of *Paris* in Greek is *Alexander* —as you saw in Monti's translation of Homer.

What will happen to you—I don't know—what will happen to me, now and always—depends almost completely on you, and on the degree and constancy of your love for me. I did not come to R[avenna] to give you up—but circumstances—chance—and *death* are the rulers of men; we shall see, in time, the unfolding of our destiny.

I kiss you 100.000 times—my dearest.

February 1st, 1820

I am awaiting with impatience—my Love— your letter, which must decide a great deal—perhaps everything—for me. I am so convinced of being right in my resolution—that even should it cost me my happiness—I hold firm. The recent predilection of A[lessandro] in favour of the person in question I cannot well understand. In Venice he had quite the opposite opinion—and if you remember, expressed it in very plain language. My reasons I have already explained—I have no others—but I shall not repeat them here again. I have no right to say more than I have already said either to you or to him—but I am also my own master to go or not to go into a house where someone lives whom I deem to be evil in every way; especially when it is a case (as recently it has been) of my occupying part of the same house.

Pray tell me your decision once for all;—if, after all that I have endured, I am to be sacrificed, I am sorry that it is not to be for a better reason—and for a subject more deserving than this kept woman; but what will be, will be. Remember that I have come twice to Ravenna to please you—that *I loved you with all my heart*—and that I shall go away not owing to a whim of my own, nor from fatigue, nor from a failure of the slightest part of the love I have always felt and *always shall feel* for you—but because I realize that to remain in a town where I should only see you very seldom, would be worse than separation—for both of us.

Pray answer me and at once—if you can—for I have orders to give to Lega, and do not fail to explain to Papa and to your brother that our relation is not ending through any instability on my part.

6 o'clock

My Love: Last night I said 'perhaps'—and although for many reasons besides the love I feel for you, I should like to see you in your own house—I cannot suddenly resolve to take a step that seems to me cowardly, and which I am sure, after the first moments, which cause *everything to be forgotten*, I should never forgive myself for having taken in view of all the circumstances that have been the cause and the accompaniment of this disagreement I leave to the fair Helen all the advantages of her worthy triumph I have promised, and I shall certainly keep my word, not to try any more to get rid of her either directly or indirectly- and this conduct is the only possible course—since only A[lessandro] has a true right to dismiss her I have thought about it all night—but in spite of all my love for you—I cannot suddenly reconcile myself to going back to a house where she is living —Perhaps in time it will be possible—but now—it would be buying too dearly the pleasure of returning to your arms

We shall see each other at the assembly, I hope—I shall go punctually at 7. A[lessandro] wanted me to give him an answer this morning—but I am still too tormented to do it. I could do it easily—my Heart would only too gladly dictate it- but *afterwards*?

Meanwhile we shall see each other at the assembly Believe me ever and always yours

But in spite of all this—it was Byron who yielded 'Teresa the second' remained in Guiccioli's household; Byron, with Allegra and all his menagerie, moved into the apartment on the first floor—and harmony appeared to be restored.

February 7th

My Love: The Guiccioli revolution is the consequence of the

revolution in Spain, and the good humour of A[lessandro] is caused by his having read the supplement to the *Lugano Gazette*. What a good thing Politics are in this world! Enough—so long as the good news is not contradicted next Sunday—for then I am afraid that the despotism of Ferdinand VII and of Teresa II would come to life again—indeed the Maid has more talent than his Catholic Majesty—and is so much the more dangerous.

As you wish—Miss Biron will be at your orders—but—but—never mind.

I will come to you whenever you wish. To go to the assembly without you would be neither suitable nor pleasurable—at least for me. I do not want to disappoint you, but if that is what you fear, it would be quite easy to stay at home together; the assembly itself is the most indifferent and tedious affair. I went to the others because you wished me to, and for no other reason.

Come—if you will—for the child; she is already dressed. Believe me with all my soul always and entirely. Your lover forever.

Teresa was to 'come for the child'. For now the Ravenna Carnival was in full swing, and 'Miss Biron'—not yet four years old—was to drive with Teresa down the Corso in her coach-and-six—preceded by outriders with blue and white feathers in their caps—as part of the gay cavalcade. Byron, too, would follow in his gaudy post-coach, sometimes bringing with him an English guest, William Bankes, the explorer, with whom he 'buffooned very merrily'. On these occasions Byron wore a somewhat sinister wax mask, with a black beard.*

'There is,' Byron wrote, 'to a foreigner, a mixture of mystery and hilarity in the general burst from everyday cares, that renders a Carnival peculiarly attractive . . . Grave and

* This mask—generously presented to the Keats-Shelley Memorial Library in Rome by Lord Clarke, the British Ambassador—may still be seen there.

gay, old and young, handsome and those who might be called so by courtesy, were all abroad, laughing, flirting, tormenting, pleasant and sometimes pleasing . . . It is at this periodical Saturnalia that all ranks are jostled, and mingled and delighted, and all this without fear, observance or offence . . . Curiosity is always excited, sometimes Passion, and occasionally Pleasure. Life becomes for the moment a drama without the fiction.'[19]

These were the aspects of his life in Ravenna that Byron whole-heartedly enjoyed,—taking part, with childlike gusto, in the mild social diversions of the little country town—not, indeed very unlike the life he might have led in Nottingham, but still enhanced for him by a sense of novelty and freedom. Here, he told Hoppner, he had found 'Conversazioni . . . and much better ones than any at Venice . . . small games at hazard . . . other card tables, and as much talk and coffee as you please . . . There is to be a theatre in April, and a fair, and an opera, and another opera in June, besides the fine weather of nature's giving, and the rides in the Forest of Pine.'[20]

He was freed, besides from the constant menace of English tourists which had hung over him in Venice,—and from the painful self-consciousness, now defiant, now propitiatory, which the presence of his fellow-countrymen awakened in him. Here his only guests were of his own choosing. At the end of April came Sir Humphry Davy, the great Irish scientist, 'much pleased with the *primitive Italian* character of the people, who like Strangers because they see so few of them'.[21] Teresa exercised her charms upon him, but overreached herself by asking, when he was talking about Mount Vesuvius, whether 'there was not a similar volcano in Ireland?'—and continued, with childish pertinacity, to insist that she was right, until Byron guessed that she meant Mount Hecla in Iceland. After their guest's departure she implored Byron: 'Pray beg him to give me something to dye my eyebrows black—I have tried a thousand things and the colour *will* come off.' 'All this', commented her lover, 'with the great-

est earnestness; and what you will be surprised at, she is neither ignorant nor a fool, but really well educated and clever. But they speak like children, when first out of their convents; and after all, this is better than an English blue-stocking.'*

Better than Annabella, perhaps—yet not wholly satisfactory. Byron's little notes to Teresa at this time are affectionate, teasing, familiar, but there is in them an underlying note of both condescension and uneasiness. Besides, he was sometimes, already, more than a little bored. Even before the Carnival was over, he had discovered that the Ravenna parties —once their first novelty had worn off—were as tedious as provincial parties anywhere else. In a way, indeed, they were worse; for at least at home he had never been deprived of 'good talk', while in this respect the Conversazioni in Ravenna were 'not Society at all'. 'They go to the theatre to talk and into company to hold their tongues. The *women* sit in a circle, and the men gather into groups, or they play at dreary *Faro* or *Lotto Reale* for small sums.'[22]

To his friends in England, indeed, he still swaggered about the great houses where he was received as the *amico di casa* or *amico di cuore,* and boasted how completely he had settled into regular *serventismo.* 'I double a shawl with considerable alacrity; but have not yet arrived at the perfection of putting it on the right way; and I hand in and out, and know my post in a Conversazione and theatre; and play at cards as well as a man can do who of all the Italian pack can only distinguish *Asso* and *Re.*'[23]

All this had been a game, but soon it had become a game that was a little tedious; and then—it suddenly ceased to seem

* *L.J.,* V, p. 24 Byron had a particular dislike of any show of learning in women. Our age',, he wrote to Kinnaird, 'is an affected age and when affectation prevails the *fair* sex—or rather the *blue* —are always strongly tinctured with it. A little learning may be swelled to an ominous size by artifice. Madame de Staël, I grant, is a clever woman; but all the other *madams* are not Staëls.' Byron to Kinnaird, September 17th, 1820. *Byron, A Self-Portrait* (ed. Peter Quennell. John Murray, London, 1950), p. 527.

worth playing at all. More and more, in his great rooms in the Palazzo Guiccioli, where the fox and monkey bit each other and Allegra screamed in a babyish tantrum, Byron began to feel himself alone. 'A foreigner', he had called himself, writing to Teresa in such a moment, 'far from the moral customs and ways of thought and behaviour of my fellow-countrymen',—and this sense of having come into a world entirely alien, now grew daily upon him.

'Their moral is not your moral,' he told Murray, 'their life is not your life . . . The Conventual education, the Cavalier Servitude, the habits of thought and living are so entirely different, and the difference becomes so much more striking the more you live intimately with them, that I know not how to make you comprehend a people, who are at once temperate and profligate, serious in their character and buffoons in their amusements, capable of impressions and passions which are at once *sudden* and *durable*. . . .'[24]

Was it of Teresa that he was thinking? She, too, had succumbed to a passion that was *sudden* and *durable*. Would he, her Cavalier Servente, be able to stay the course? 'Their system has its rules, and its fitnesses, and decorums, so as to be reduced to a kind of discipline or game at hearts, which admits few deviations, unless you wish to lose it . . . They exact fidelity from a lover as a debt of honour; while they pay the husband as a tradesman, that is, not at all. You hear a person's character, male or female, canvassed, not as depending on their conduct to their husbands or wives, but to their mistress or lover. And--and—that's all'[25]

Yes, that was all. So long as Byron had made love in Venice to women of no repute—to a gondolier's daughter or a Fornarina--the difference between the Italian background and his own had only given a touch of exotic colour, of heightened intensity, to his adventure. For in superficial relations it is variety and brilliance that is pleasing. It is only when the heart is involved, that the lover begins to seek not the alien and exciting, but the familiar and kind.

And this was precisely what, in Teresa, he did not find. She was pretty, she was passionate, she was—in spite of all

her faults of taste—a lady. But she was not, as at first he had hoped, an animal of his own species. This, too, he was beginning to feel, was but one more encounter of strangers. But by the time he had fully realized this, a habit—which is responsible for more lasting ties than passion—had been formed.

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

Your little head is heated now by that damned novel—the author of which has been—in every country and at all times —my evil Genius.[26]

As for the rest, I vow I don't know what I have done to you. Zinnantina's Tuda was not there—and you know the Zinanni—so what is it?

I am not riding today—so when you can—or wish—I am here and ever and entirely yours.

'The note is copied from some French book. The sentences are coupled together like horses of different colours—and form a rather singular team.—" Besoin " does not need an *e* at the end. Dieu *sait* and not " *sais* " (as you write) that you are a very bad child and a very naughty O Your fidelity is like your progress in this new language, vacillating.*

Bon soir—bon repos—*bonne nuit* is not F[rench].'

My Love for Ever: We shall be meeting. I have not got the Letters of the Maintenon—who was a devout wh . . .—and not a merry one like Clemilda—so I can't even understand what the aforesaid Clemilda can want with such a book. If I had it—I would certainly send it you.

I have read the ' few lines ' of your note with all due attention—they are written with your usual eloquence, which you will never lose, until you lose—not a Heart, but *Corinne*.

There was, now, some further unpleasantness with Guic-

* Two lines erased or torn. The last words legible are '. . . and rash vows, like this evening's breeze'.

cioli—this time about some money which Byron had advanced for the engagement of a prima donna—Mme Pasta—for the Ravenna opera.*

March 3rd, 1820

'*He is my creditor.*' How? And if it were so, since he has been paid 200 scudi—is that not a reason the more for giving me a receipt? He should not have signed any obligation—but these are trifles. Let us come to the facts. The sum that I have to pay to the Comune—or to the Deputies—is 400 scudi. I have acknowledged it, and I do so very gladly, with all possible pleasure. Of this, the sum of 200 scudi has already been paid—for which He refuses me a receipt—for reasons which I do not understand and do not want to understand. I am quite ready to pay the whole sum tomorrow—and among other reasons for this—not to let Count Guiccioli be placed under an obligation on my behalf—but if I pay, I shall once again ask for a receipt– the first duty of anyone who *receives* anything, even from one of his own peasants.

On this occasion it was to Teresa that Byron complained—but a sense of unease and mistrust was once again clouding their relationship.

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

Very naughty 'O'.[27]—I should like to know what that paper was, which you were reading just now, after getting back from the Conversazione—and which you would not show me. It looked very much like contraband. Think of a good excuse at once and send me the most probable lie you can invent.

And by the next day, another violent quarrel—this time

* See letter of January 17th. Byron had already advanced half the sum he had promised (two hundred pounds), but Guiccioli wanted to take the credit for the whole transaction himself, and therefore refused to give him a receipt—hence Byron's very natural annoyance. 'Vie', p. 372.

provoked by Teresa's jealousy—had broken out. Only a few days earlier Byron had told Murray that Italian women 'are extremely tenacious, and jealous as furies; not permitting their lovers even to marry if they can help it, and keeping them always close to them in public as in private whenever they can'.[28] The incident to which the following letters refer must have confirmed this opinion, but he would hardly have taken so seriously Teresa's threat of breaking with him on so very slight a pretext, unless this quarrel had been one of many. One may, indeed, surmise that some of these storms were deliberately provoked by Teresa—who had enough *intelligence du cœur* to know that tedium was, in Byron, her greatest enemy. 'His misfortune', Annabella had noted in her Journal many years before, 'is a passion for excitement . . . It is the tedium of a monotonous existence that leads beings of this type, even when they have a good heart, along the most dangerous paths . . . The love of tormenting comes from this source.'[29] But Annabella, who analysed so neatly, could not act on her conclusions. Teresa, with less reasoning, but a quicker instinct, provoked the storm that broke the tedium, and changed the tormentor into the tormented.

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

M[arch] 4th, 1820

Your imagination is too active--To have sent you a book which you have wanted to see for some time, is not surprising and is no reflection on you.

'You will not see me again.' Why—What have I done to you? It is true that I did not stay by your side during cards this evening at the C[avalli]'s, because you put yourself in a corner where there was not room for your friend—for reasons which perhaps you know better than I. But this does not seem to me a sufficient reason to end a friendship of some duration and many trials.

If I have been guilty towards you—you can find it out. In a small town one can find out the truth, when one wishes either to speak evil or to hear it.

If you are serious in your resolution—I am not a man who will be importunate—but I require you *to repeat* this resolution in *cold blood* in writing—then I shall draw my own conclusions. Remember only that *you* want this, and not I.

March 5th, 1820

I have sent twice for a reply to my last night's letter. At least, whatever your decision may be, I think that in justice to me you should tell me, for my guidance, your definite decision and the reasons for it. I have a duty towards your father, with whom—before taking the steps which I must take if you are really determined to hold me to this very strange decision—I must speak for a moment.

Remember always that you are the one who wants to break off our relationship—and not I—and that I have never wronged you in word, or deed or thought.

[Paper torn] In case you really are resolved . . . because—I shall not importune you any more and shall leave at a moment's notice.

I am nevertheless always your friend and lover*

It would be better to tell me tonight—anything is better than this uncertainty.

I left because the evening showed signs of becoming very long—and I saw Papa—who did not look as if he would be leaving soon. Pray tell me what you have to say now instead of tomorrow—because—I too have my own reasons for wanting to know, and have some things to decide before Saturday.[80]

P.S. Luigi has come back saying that you have gone to bed. You will say what suits you,—but pray say it soon—for I will not be exposed any longer to the caprices either of husbands or of 'amiche' who take a pleasure in being as ungracious as possible.

* 'Amico ed amante.' 'Amante in eterno' 'amico ed amante in eterno' (friend and lover for ever) became Byron's and Teresa's regular signature to each other.

My Love:[81] You count on the power that you have had over me until now and over my actions—my thoughts—my heart —to make me believe this—and everything else you want—and that is most convenient to you: now and for ever. I do not say that you will not succeed now, because you have already succeeded only too often—but I warn you that a moment will come when your [arts]* will be in vain.

It is better that we should not see each other again tonight —tomorrow perhaps we can talk more quietly.—I am inclined to believe what you say—but I also have my suspicions sometimes, and you, who are at least equally suspicious, ought rather to pity than blame me.—I beg you not to come to me now—because to see each other at this moment could do nothing but increase my grief. Tomorrow I shall see you and we will talk.[82]

So the spring wore on—with Byron's spirits 'unequal—now high, now low'.[83] To Harriette Wilson, who wrote at this time to ask whether he was 'tolerably happy', he replied: 'In answer to your wish that I should tell you if I was "happy", perhaps it would be a folly in any human being to say so of themselves, particularly a man who has had to pass through the sort of things which I have encountered; but I can at least say that I am not miserable, and am perhaps more tranquil than ever I was in England.'[84]

He told Kinnaird that he had been 'changing my sea-residence for a land house, much as a Triton would on coming ashore. I have had to buy me a landau in lieu of a Conch or Gondola, to get me horses, to alter my tarpaulin liveries into terra firma fashions, and to leave nothing of the Sea about us but the crest on my carriage, a Mermaid, as you may remember. I have brought me furniture, and new saddles, and all that from Milan, and chairs and tables from various parts of the Globe, at some cost and great trouble.'[85]

His health was suited by his long daily rides in the Pineta, and he was working hard; having completed the *Prophecy of*

Dante, of which Teresa corrected the proofs,† and the translation of *Francesca da Rimini*, he had now started his Venetian tragedy, *Marino Faliero*. About this he later wrote to Murray: 'I never wrote or copied *an entire Scene of that play* without being obliged to *break off—to break* a commandment, to obey a woman's, and to forget God's.'[86] And to Teresa he wrote: 'It was written by your side, and in moments assuredly more tragic for me as a man than as a writer—because *you* were in distress and danger.'

But indeed, the emotional storms of the next few months only contributed to his intellectual fertility. Violent passions, even painful, gave him the enhanced sense of his own existence which is the spring of all creative energy. 'The great object of life', he wrote, 'is sensation—to feel that we exist, even though in pain. It is this "craving void" which drives us . . . to intemperate, but keenly felt pursuits of any description, whose principal attraction is the agitation inseparable from their accomplishment.'

And, within the next few weeks, the events that took place within the walls of Palazzo Guiccioli, were sufficiently dramatic to satisfy even Byron's need for sensation. A peculiar intensity was given to them, not only by the character of the chief protagonists, but by the nature of the society which played the part of chorus: a society as observant, gossipy and censorious as that of any other provincial town—but, in addition, one in which political feeling—since it was allied to religious prejudice—ran as high as in Ireland, say, in the time of the 'Black and Tans'. Moreover, as in Ireland, this political animus was extended into every branch of private life. When Byron first arrived in Ravenna—only five years after the departure of the French and the restoration of Papal rule—the town was divided into two mutually suspicious camps; the Clerical and the Liberal. The first centred round the Palazzo dell'Arcivescovado, close to the Cathedral Square; for

* 'While I am scribbling to you, they [the proofs] are corrected by one who passes for the prettiest woman in Romagna.' (*L J.*, V, p. 16, April 23rd, 1820.) † Word torn out.

there lived the Cardinal Legate, the Pope's representative, whose power it is hardly possible to overestimate.* The spiritual power and the temporal, the administration of justice and finance, the control of the police, the direction of education, the welfare of the poor—all these were in his hands—or rather in the hands of the large number of ambitious, crafty and frequently corrupt minor prelates and employees who formed his court.[37] The greater part of the taxes ended in the pockets of these 'administrators', or in 'pensions' to religious bodies; and bribery and corruption were so much the acknowledged order of the day, that the clerk of one Comune frankly presented to his Gonfaloniere the following account:

For one *magna-magna* scudi
For another *magna-magna* scudi . . .

saying that, as he did not know how to spell the names of all the people who received the bribes ordered by the Gonfaloniere, this seemed to him the most suitable expression for them! †

'Tout le monde vole, tout le monde est content, et cependant maudit les prêtres,' commented Stendhal, and added that a friend of his had said to him: 'Demain Sa Sainteté peut me jeter dans les cachots de Saint Leo et confisquer ma fortune: cela sera cruel, mais non pas *injuste*; il n'y a aucune loi qui le défende.'[38]

Nevertheless the Clerical party of Ravenna, in the eyes of many of the old-fashioned aristocracy, still represented stability and order; and its members regarded with the gravest suspicion, as traitors to their religion and their class, the new-fangled Liberals, like Teresa's father, who openly regretted the days of the French occupation and dreamed of a free and independent Italy. But every day, as the injustice and incom-

* 'Le gouvernement', wrote Stendhal of the Romagna at this period, 'est sous le droit divin. C'est une persécution exercée par les bigots et les nobles . . . Le Pape n'est rien moins qu'un imbécile; il est ultra comme un chien, ainsi que Consalvi; mais il veut *la sua pace*.' Stendhal, *Correspondence inédite*, I, p. 141. March 28th, 1820.

† FARINA, op. cit., p. 71. *Magna-magna*, literally 'eat-eat'.

petence of the Papal regime became more and more apparent, their numbers were increasing. It was whispered that in the other cities of the Romagna, too, there was a similar discontent. Secret societies sprang up all over the province, and in every class of society: spies and informers hurried to the Cardinal's palace; priestly quills painstakingly wrote out report after report to Rome—and, from the pulpit, violent diatribes attacked the new ideas, harbingers of 'a false, un-Christian brotherhood'.

It is doubtful whether Byron, when he first came to Ravenna, was interested in, or even aware of, these local politics, which were indirectly to influence the course of his own life. Certainly he did not take any trouble to conciliate the Clerical faction—and, as has been described, he rebuffed the first advances made to him by the Cardinal, when invited to his Conversazione, making it clear that he preferred to make love in private, rather than conversation in public. On his second visit, however, he heard more of the political talk of the Gamba family, and saw for himself the misrule from which the country was suffering. His sympathies were awakened, and when, in the spring, the first signs of trouble began to show themselves, he commented on them in his letters to England (read, of course, by the police) in a tone hardly calculated to please the representatives of law and order. 'We are on the verge of a row here', he told Murray with gusto. 'The police is all on the alert, and the Cardinal glares pale through all his purple. . . .'

The walls of the town had been covered during the night with posters. 'They must have been all night about it, for the "Live republics", "death to popes and priests", are innumerable and plastered over all the palaces; ours has plenty. There is "down with the Nobility", too—they are down enough already, for that matter. . . . I vaticinate a *row* in Italy—in which case I don't know that I won't have a finger in it. I dislike the Austrians and think the Italians infamously oppressed.'[39]

He was even more convinced of this a few weeks later,

when the local Papal police actually dared to interfere with his household:

'[They] have petitioned the Cardinal against my liveries, as resembling too nearly their own lousy uniform . . . My liveries are of the colours conforming to my arms, and have been the family hue since the year 1066 . . . I have directed my ragamuffins . . . to defend themselves, in case of aggression; and, on holidays and gaudy days, I shall arm the whole set.'[40]

Some time before this—though without Byron's knowledge—the Archbishop of Ravenna had thought it worth while to trouble Cardinal Consalvi, the Secretary of State in Rome, with a report on another member of Byron's household, his steward Antonio Lega Zambelli. This man, who had previously been in Count Guiccioli's service and was Fanny Silvestrini's lover, was an unfrocked Priest who, according to the Archbishop, 'forgetting his priestly character entirely, has abandoned his ecclesiastical robes, giving himself up to a wholly secular life'. Now, the Archbishop complained, he had come back 'as the secretary of the Englishman Mylord Byron, who seems inclined to settle in Ravenna. The arrival of this Priest, and his *wholly* secular clothing and manners, have not failed to excite talk which is most prejudicial to the Ecclesiastical Order,' and therefore the Archbishop requested the Cardinal to send him 'his superior and wise suggestions and decisions on the subject'.[41]

It is probable that, in all this, the government's real interest lay not in the servant but in his master. Now that trouble was indubitably brewing, Byron's presence in the Romagna had become most undesirable—but to ask a foreigner of his rank to go away, unless there were some very definite charges against him, was manifestly impossible. Could not some indirect, yet equally efficacious way, be found? Monsieur Marini,* one of the most able and ambitious young prelates

* Mons. Pietro Marini, by birth a Roman, had come to Ravenna with the previous Legate, Cardinal Malvasia, as assessor and governor of Ravenna, and had founded with him a literary Academy known as

of the Cardinal's entourage, and a great friend of Guiccioli's, thought that it should not be too difficult. It was gently insinuated to the old gentleman that a situation which, until then, had preserved a semblance of decorum, was becoming too unseemly, that Mylord was now the true master of Palazzo Guiccioli. Was it not time for the Count to intervene?

It is not certain how much Guiccioli was really influenced by these remarks. The rest of the evidence suggests that his plans had been maturing for some time; but it is of course possible that—since he was a violent-tempered man, as well as a crafty one—some unpleasant insinuation at one of Mons. Marini's evening parties caused him to take action. What we do know is that on the morning of April 2nd, Teresa sent an agitated note to Byron. Early that morning, she wrote, before she was up, her husband had forced open her writing-desk, and had read, one by one, all the letters it contained. Fortunately, she added, they held nothing which could provide him with weapons against Byron. She ended her letter with the declaration: 'I will die, before I cease to be your true friend!'*

And now the Count decided to change his tactics. For some time, according to Teresa, his ill-humour and 'strangeness' had been increasingly marked, and finally, one evening in the middle of May, when he returned home and found Mylord, as usual, in Teresa's company, he made, for the first time, a violent scene.

'The Count went straight up to him [Byron] and said to him that the visits he had once allowed had now become displeasing to him, and that he begged him to discontinue them. Lord Byron had enough self-control to listen fairly calmly—and after replying, with noble pride, a few words signifying that he would defer to his host's age and the fact that he was

the Malvasiana. He then entered upon an ecclesiastical career and lived to become Governor of Rome (a post from which he was removed for excessive despotism), a Cardinal and Legate of Forlì.

* This letter is quoted by Teresa in the 'Vie' (pp. 376-8), but the edges of the pages on which it is written have unfortunately been nibbled by mice, so that none of the sentences are complete.

in his house, he went upstairs again. The scenes which took place after his departure upset and frightened the Countess so much by their violence, that on the following morning she sent for her father—and after confiding to him all that had occurred, she declared to him that it was impossible for her to live with the Count any longer, and begged for his permission to return and live under his protection.'[42]

At this point the story again takes an unexpected turn. From the whole of Count Gamba's behaviour until now, it would have seemed probable that he would tell his daughter roundly to attend to her wifely duties and send Byron away; but, instead, he at once agreed to her request and dispatched a formal petition to Pope Pius VII, asking that Teresa should be granted a decree of separation, on the ground that it had become utterly impossible for her to live any longer with so exacting a husband.'[43] This petition was forwarded and recommended to the Pope by Teresa's maternal grandmother, Countess Cecilia Machirelli Giordani—'a lady of the highest merit', says Teresa, 'for whom the Pope had a very great friendship'. The Pope, indeed, Gregorio Chiaramonti, was an old family friend; he had officiated, as Bishop of Imola, at the wedding of Teresa's parents, and had stayed with her grandmother at the family palazzo at Pesaro. He was therefore naturally prepossessed in favour of the family, and—according to Teresa—remarked on receiving the petition: 'such a request, made by Count Gamba on his daughter's behalf, and recommended by Countess Cecilia, cannot be anything but just.'*

Here is Count Gamba's petition:

Most Holy Father: Ruggero Gamba of the city of Ravenna, most humble petitioner of Your Holiness, with the most pro-

* 'The father of the Signora',—said Guiccioli, in referring to this petition of Gamba's when he himself appealed, later on, to Leo XII—'instead of persuading her to fulfil her duties towards her husband and dissuade her from vice and immoral conduct, did not shrink from stating to Pius VII (of happy memory) a number of falsehoods.' Elliot Papers.

found veneration states that in the past year, 1818, he gave his daughter Teresa in marriage to Signor Cavaliere Alessandro Guiccioli, of the same city. In the short space of one year the Cavaliere has behaved so strangely and heaped so many insults upon his unhappy bride, that it has become wholly impossible for her to live any longer with so exacting a Husband, and she is obliged, in the opinion of the whole city, to seek a complete separation.

In this state of affairs the petitioner humbly appeals to Your Holiness, beseeching that the Cav. Guiccioli may be ordered to pay a suitable allowance to his wife (the aforesaid daughter) in accordance with the position of her husband, in order that she may live suitably, as befits her birth and position. By the grace, etc., etc.[44]

Guiccioli's scene with Byron took place about the middle of May, and indeed on May 15th Byron was writing to Harriette Wilson:

'I am at "this present writing" in a scrape (not a pecuniary one, but personal, about one of your ambrosial sex) which may probably end this very evening. Don't be frightened. The Italians don't fight: they stab a little now and then; but it isn't that, it is a divorce and separation; and as the aggrieved person is a rich noble and old, and has had a fit of discovery against his moiety, who is only twenty years old, matters look menacing.'[45]

For meanwhile the Count's spies had not been idle. No less than eighteen of his servants—ranging from his accountant and major-domo to the cook, the maids, the coachman, one of the Moors (the other was faithful to Teresa) and even two blacksmiths and carpenters—were now engaged in spying upon his wife—and later on he required all of them to sign a written statement, which he forwarded to the Pope.[46] This evidence affirmed that until the middle of May 'perfect harmony' had reigned between Teresa and her husband, 'who had constantly showed to his Lady Consort all the attentions of a most loving husband'—and that the servants

'never saw any act that was not in harmony with their mutual respect for each other'. The cause of a change in Guiccioli was attributed by them all, according to their testimony, only to 'the jealousy that the Cavaliere felt for the Englishman Lord Byron, who was then no more admitted to call upon the lady'.

'She, who until then had sometimes been seen to go upstairs secretly to the rooms rented and inhabited by Mylord, then began to go there almost daily, during the two hours after dinner, when her husband was resting. She gradually ceased from going to church, to parties, to the "trottata"[47] and to the theatre with her husband, and "instead made use of the theatre hours to join Mylord in his rooms, taking care to be warned of her husband's return by one of her own footmen, Luigi Morelli, who used to stand on guard outside the house door". This man was dismissed by Guiccioli on this account, but was immediately taken into Byron's service instead, and "continued to do the best he could".'

In addition the two carpenters testified to having seen Teresa in Mylord's rooms, while her husband was asleep downstairs. And, according to another statement, 'the blacksmith was one day called, by order of the Countess, and was ordered to remove the lock from a certain room, which he did in the presence of Lord Byron and of the Countess'. The 'certain room' was the one leading into Byron's bedroom, and the smith was ordered to change the lock of that door, because a second key was in Count Guiccioli's hands. But later on in the day, 'the Count having returned, he found the said door open, and the lock removed. He then ordered the smith to replace the lock. At the sound of the hammering, Lord Byron and Contessa Teresa appeared on the other side of the door'.[48]

The trouble was now beyond mending. By May 20th, Byron was writing to Murray: 'The Contessa G. is on the eve of being divorced on account of our having been taken together *quasi* in the fact, and, what is worse, that she did not *deny* it: but the Italian public are on our side, particularly

the women—and the men also, because they say that *he* had no business to take the business up now, after a year of toleration. The law is against him, because he slept with his wife after her admission. . . .'[49]

A few days later he continued the story: 'There will probably be a separation between them, as her family, which is a principal one, by its connections, are very much against *him,* for the whole of his conduct;—and he is old and obstinate, and she is young and a woman, determined to sacrifice everything to her affections. I have given her the best advice, viz. to stay with him,—pointing out the state of a separated woman . . . and making the most exquisite moral reflections, —but to no purpose. She says "I will stay with him, if he will let you remain with me. It is hard that I should be the only woman in Romagna who is not to have her *Amico*".'[50]

During all this time life at Palazzo Guiccioli must have been very odd indeed. Although Shelley wrote of Byron's 'splendid apartments' and Byron himself described them to his friends in much the same strain, Palazzo Guiccioli was in fact a not particularly spacious town-house, with a single staircase. On these stairs Byron, Guiccioli, Teresa, and all their numerous servants—not to mention Allegra, the dogs, the cats, the monkey, the peacock, the guinea-hens and the Egyptian crane—must have met several times a day. Then they would retire to their separate apartments—the Count and his wife quarrelling downstairs and Byron sulking upstairs, while love-letters were carried up and down by Morelli and the negro page, and the servants took sides and spied and whispered, and the Pope's answer still delayed.

And now we can again follow the story in Byron's letters to Teresa. The next group of thirteen notes were enclosed in a folder on which Teresa had written '*Avanti*' or '*Après l'abboccamento*'—that is, before or after the interview (between Byron and Guiccioli). They are not dated, but they all plainly belong to the late spring and early summer of 1820, since the first refers to the opening of Teresa's writing-desk by her husband on April 2nd, and the last two to the

Papal decree of July 6th, which allowed Teresa to leave her husband.

These notes enable us to follow all the stages of Byron's behaviour, after he had realized that a choice was now inevitable: that he must either make a permanent break with Teresa herself—or be left with her on his hands. Faced with this alternative Byron—as he had already done five months before in Venice—made a last attempt to go away. 'There cannot be any remedy', he told her, 'but my departure.' His 'exquisite moral reflections' on the subject were based on the most conventional of arguments: 'With me you would be unhappy and compromised in the eyes of the world. With your husband you would be, if not happy, at least respectable and respected.' I do not think we need see in all this only the last efforts of a reluctant lover to free himself. Byron's conventionality was genuine, and he probably believed every word of these remarks. If he had played for so many years the rebel's part, it was because society, to his mind, had not been kind to him. But he never questioned—as Shelley did—the essential validity of the social laws. He wrote to Moore of himself and Teresa as 'those who are in the wrong—the lady and her lover'. Moreover, he very much disliked, in women, the spectacle of uncontrolled behaviour. He had had enough of being the centre of violent scenes in public. His mother had flung the tongs at him in the presence of his friends; Caroline Lamb had tried to cut her veins at Lady Heathcote's ball; the Fornarina had slashed his picture with a bread-knife. But what he *liked* in women—or thought he liked—was the gentleness of the antelope, the timidity of the gazelle; and when he was looking for a wife, nothing could have been more conventional than the considerations that had inspired his choice. Teresa had done herself great harm in the first period of their liaison—as Fanny had tried to tell her—by the headlong impulsiveness of her behaviour. And now, for the last time, Byron tried to bring her to her senses—to make her realize how serious, how *lasting*, the consequences of her decision would be. 'A woman requires a great deal of

character, the truest friendship, and the profoundest and *untiring* love . . . to decide on a course so disadvantageous.'

But it was no good. Teresa merely cried—complained that he did not really love her—and held more strongly to her determination. 'I see how it will end; she will be the sixteenth Mrs. Shuffleton.'[51]

The first of these notes refers to Guiccioli's search in his wife's writing-desk.

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

Avant

My Love[52] The skeleton key—that is why I wanted my letters in my own hands *for the present*—and nevertheless you violently insulted me, because of my request. Pray look after the letters that are shut up in your writing-desk (with the music that was at La Mira) for something might be found there, if not of *mine*—yet something that you would not like.

My opinion is still the same—but if there is no remedy—I assuredly shall do my duty. Of my love you cannot doubt, and perhaps the greatest proof has been—that I prefer to sacrifice myself, rather than you.

Believe me ever and entirely

P.S. Your illness seems to me only *skin-deep*—when shall we see each other—tomorrow?

Remember—do not sign anything for that arch-scoundrel.

Avant

My Love: I do not esteem him and I do not fear him—he will do as he pleases. For my part I feel love and a duty towards you—but I do not wish to influence your decision in any way. After having done what he has done—no vileness—no wickedness—on his part would surprise me—or anyone else.*

Talk to your friends and relations and as you decide—so also will decide your

* The reference is presumably to Guiccioli's breaking open Teresa's writing-desk.

Avant

My love + 'Women! Women! Who can guess . . .* etc.—What do you want me to do about it? You do not realize—he never does anything without a reason—and this is only the beginning.—I repeat to you that there is not and cannot be any remedy but my departure.

Of my love be assured—but I cannot understand how a love can be *true* that sacrifices the beloved object. With me you would be unhappy and compromised in the eyes of the world; with your husband you would be, if not happy, at least respectable and respected. So I see no alternative except a separation, which sooner or later would in any case have to come. I want to save you—even at the price of your—unjust-- hatred—which however, in time, would give place to a feeling of gratitude.

Of what can you accuse me? I have come, I have gone—I have come back, I have remained. It is more than a year that I have done nothing but obey you in every respect—so long as it was possible to reconcile your welfare with your wishes,—and now that I see that this is no longer possible,—I shall take the only course that can be either reasonable or honourable.

I shall come to you this evening- and we will talk Believe me ever and wholly your true friend and lover.

Avant

My love + I will come—but when and how?—If you do not fear for yourself, we must think of your family—for it is really against them that these things are directed—Against myself (apart from what I feel for you) they cannot do anything—but it would not be very heroic of me to compromise you all without sharing in the danger. So I would like to be

* 'Donne, donne, eterni Dei!
Chi vi arriva a indovinar?'
(Women, women!—Eternal Gods!
Who can ever guess your wishes?)
ROSSINI, *Barbiere di Siviglia*, Act I, Scene 7.

instructed beforehand—how to behave—and for this purpose I should like to speak to Papa.

Indeed it is better for you in every way to be with A[lessandro], in six months you will think so too—and will be assured that I have been your *true* and sacrificed friend.

.

You accuse me—I do not deserve it—and you know it. The time for deciding was before leaving V[enice], to which unhappy place you will remember how, and how much, I implored you not to force me to return. Behold the consequences! *

Avant

My love + What do you want me to reply? He has known —or ought to have known, all these things for many months —there is a mystery here that I do not understand, and prefer not to understand. Is it only now that he knows of your infidelity? † What can he have thought—that we are made of stone—or that I am *more* or *less* than a man? I know of one remedy only—what I have already suggested, *my departure. It would be a great sacrifice,* but rather than run into things like this every day it becomes necessary—almost a duty—for me not to remain any longer in these parts.

He says that it is impossible for him to tolerate this relationship any longer—I answer that he *never* should have tolerated it. Assuredly it is not the happiest condition, even for me, to be exposed to his scenes, which come too late, now. But I shall do what a gentleman should do, that is, not cause disturbance in a family. All this would already be over—if that man had allowed me to leave in December of last year.—He not only *wished* me to *come,* but he said to me with his own lips that I ought not to go away—'This being too far-fetched a remedy'.‡

* The above are two fragments of a letter, of which the rest has been destroyed, but which from the context appears to belong to this period.

† Teresa has tried to change this sentence to 'is suspicious of your fidelity'.

‡ This is an interesting sidelight on the events of the previous

In these circumstances we shall not see each other tonight. Always and *all yours*!

Avant

My love + As things are now it is better *not* to come—just now—out of prudence. If He is in earnest—he will do everything possible (according to his nature—and for revenge) not to let you obtain any *allowance*. In this you must not *give way*—not so much for the thing in itself, but on account of your reputation.

He assuredly has some end in view—he is a man who cannot be trusted for a moment.

I fancy that it has always been his intention to make the matter end like this, and that he made me come the *second time* on purpose.

Speak to Papa—and then (or before) we will talk. Do you want me to take you to the theatre or not? Tell me.

If the matter ends with your separation from him—(which I do not wish—though, on the other hand, it would not surprise me) we shall make our decision,--and I shall do all that should be done in the circumstances.—

I am only sorry for you—and just because *I love you*; I am sorry too for your family,—For me--it doesn't matter—if I can help in any way to make you less unhappy.—

Now I feel doubly the burden of not being free to render you greater justice in the eyes of the world*--and also to assure your independence after my death--in case (as I hope) you should survive me. But I shall manage somehow to overcome this difficulty.

December, when Byron—at Count Gamba's request, and—it would now appear—not only with Count Guiccioli's consent, but his approval —returned to settle in Ravenna.

* Byron, as early as July 1819, had written to Augusta: 'If you see my Spouse—do pray tell her that I wish to marry again; and as probably she may wish the same, is there no way in *Scotland*? without compromising her immaculacy?—cannot it be done there by the husband solely?' *Astarte*, p. 291.

I will come to you after changing when I come back from the Pineta.

Believe me always and wholly your friend and lover.

Avant

My Love + I shall not go to any place of amusement—until this affair is finished one way or the other. I shall ride, because that is exercise--in a solitary place—and not in order to be seen.

If A[lessandro] wants to speak to me, let him—but assuredly I shall have very little to say in reply. If, after suffering the insult of his requiring separate rooms—owing to his mad folly—you go back to yielding to his false blandishments and dotardly caresses, it is you who will be to blame, and your weakness of character will be more confirmed than ever. However do what suits you—so long as I know it for my own guidance. I am

Byron's fear, that his liaison might be used by the Papal Government as a political weapon against the whole Gamba family, was justified by events, although not until some time later. But for the present, public opinion in Ravenna was wholly on Byron's and Teresa's side: 'All the world are implicated, including priests and cardinals. The public opinion is furious against *him*, because he ought to have cut the matter short at *first*, and not waited twelve months to begin.'[58]

Yet during the last weeks, according to Teresa, Guiccioli was seeking daily interviews with Byron, and it must have been after one of these meetings that the preceding letter was written.

By now Byron had justifiably reached the conclusion that the Count was 'a man who cannot be trusted for a moment', and who had a secondary motive for practically everything he said or did. Moreover there was another unpleasing aspect to the affair—one which Byron, to his credit, never hinted at in his letters to his English friends. This was the financial one.

We have seen that the Count had borrowed money from Byron in Bologna, and had hoped to avoid repaying it by letting him occupy, rent free, the upper floor of the Ravenna palazzo. But, not content with this arrangement, he had attempted, during the spring, to obtain yet another loan from his guest. This, indeed, had been the beginning of all the trouble. 'Guiccioli having continued his plans for making money,' says a statement of Teresa to her lawyers, 'and the Countess having naturally refused to be his intermediary, and moreover her delicate health requiring precautions which inconvenienced him, he began to be estranged and to become insufferable'.[54]

In Rangone's *Cronaca* the story is told in even plainer terms: 'Suddenly the Cavaliere suggests to his wife to ask Byron for another 4.000 scudi. She refuses—out of honest motives. The Cavaliere insists, is estranged from his wife—and requires that Lord shall move out of the house and see her no more. In vain. Mylord remains, to work off his credit, and continues to visit the lady as much as he likes.'[55]

The *Cronaca* is not, of course, wholly reliable, being tinged with provincial curiosity, envy and spite, nevertheless it is interesting to know that this was the general opinion in Ravenna at the time. And that a similar view was held by the Government is shown by a report subsequently sent to the Austrian police in Venice by the Vice Legate of Ravenna, Conte Lavinio De Medici Spada:

'So long as the Guiccioli's avaricious and sordid mind nourished hopes of the Lord's guineas, there was no trouble; but when these faded, owing to his Wife's refusal to help him—since love of Byron had not destroyed in her the sense of honour and delicacy which her husband had never known—then, pretending to have just become aware of their relationship, he showed some resentment, which led to his separation.'[56]

The following note from Byron to Teresa would appear to relate to one of the many unpleasant scenes which were taking place at this time in Palazzo Guiccioli.

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

It is just because I love you so much—that I cannot be patient where money matters are involved—especially with *him*. I would make any sacrifice for you—but in that case I want you to myself—entirely and now—all these things belittle me in my own opinion.

To him I cannot give way. He treats me with the insolence that he would show to one of his servants, and I will not bear such things any longer. I will submit to the opinion of any gentleman, that in this affair he has been equally lacking in courtesy and good faith—but enough!

Farewell, I kiss you

Avant

My Love + Only this was lacking to complete our unhappiness!* I am, however, not surprised. And in these circumstances I shall not be allowed to visit you.

But most of all I am distressed by the last words of your note. They would be unjust at any time, and now more than ever. I always advised you for your good—and on seeing that it was useless, finally gave way to your wishes—and for this you now reproach me. In spite of this, I am constantly, and shall ever be

Your ever most sincere and loving friend

After the Interview

My Love + + + The usual inconclusive business—and inconcludable, if there be such a word.

He proposed that I should *go away* (saying that this is the *general desire* and opinion—and that his friend Marini is surprised that I should stay to cause trouble in the life of a family) or else that I should use my influence over you to

* The reference in this letter is to an attack of erysipelas from which Teresa was suffering. On May 24th Byron was writing to Moore: 'I should have retreated, but honour, and an erysipelas which has attacked her, prevent me—to say nothing of love, for I love her most entirely, though not enough to persuade me to sacrifice everything to a frenzy.' (*L.J.*, V, p. 32.)

persuade you to detach yourself from *me* and to love *him*—and also that I should attach myself, as soon as possible, to *another*.

As to separation—he says that he does not want it—not being disposed to 'lose the woman'—to disgust his relations—and, above all, to *pay* an allowance. He does not want to cut the figure, he says, of a 'complacent cuckold'—and he charges me to persuade you that true love is *conjugal* love. I am using his own words.—He says that, my love not being a first passion—like yours—I should not behave like this, etc. etc. He does not want this—he does not want that—and does not know what he does want—but meanwhile he does not want us to love each other—which however I always shall.

The preceding letter shows that the long prepared *abboccamento* between Guiccioli and Byron had taken place at last—and the Count had made a final attempt to persuade Byron to go away. He had been taking legal advice, and had discovered that for Teresa to obtain a separation, by which he would have to pay her alimony, would not suit his books at all. If he had set spies on his wife and her lover, if he had so assiduously watched them himself all these long months, it had certainly not been in order to be forced to return his wife's dowry and pay her a handsome allowance.

The interview with Byron having failed, Count Guiccioli took up his pen and wrote a long letter to his wife's brother, Pietro Gamba, in Rome, telling him the whole story. This letter was shown later on by Pietro to Teresa, and by her to Byron, to whom it seemed so curious that he sent Murray a copy of it. 'Remember', he added 'that Guiccioli *is telling his own story*, true in some things and very *false* in the details . . . *You* want to know *Italy*', he continued. 'There's more than Lady Morgan can tell me in these sheets, if carefully perused.'[57]

But meanwhile old Count Gamba had taken action. To the petition on his daughter's behalf, which he had already sent to the Pope, he now added a personal letter to Cardinal

Rusconi, the Papal Legate in Ravenna.* In his letter, of which the original draft was preserved by Teresa, he not only protested against the 'calumnies' which Guiccioli was spreading about him—to the effect that Teresa's closest relations were encouraging her illicit love-affair—but referred, in a passage which someone—perhaps Teresa—has subsequently tried to erase, to his son-in-law's attempt to 'prostitute' his daughter.

In reading this significant letter it should be borne in mind that it was not addressed to the Vatican, but to a prelate actually living on the spot and by birth a citizen of Bologna, who would be fully aware whether Gamba's statement as to 'public opinion' were accurate or not. The draft among the Gamba papers is only a fragment, on which Teresa has written: 'Part of the original of a letter from Count Ruggero Gamba to His Eminence the Legate Rusconi in 1820.'[58]

June 23rd [1820]

'. . . Now it is truly surprising that the Cavaliere should attempt to put part of the blame due to him upon my shoulders by his calumnies. I say frankly, calumnies, for if he had believed what he now attempts to make others suspect, why did he then invite Lord to Ravenna, and in his own house, too? In either of the two cases, be he in good faith or bad, does he not by this admit himself to be the blackguard which the world considers him? I hope that your Eminence will recognize him to be one- -and that will suffice me. For if I wished, by words, deeds or writings, to prove how he attempted, for vile financial considerations, to prostitute, sell† and disgrace my daughter and make her unhappy, I could show it with the greatest clearness; but the extremely delicate

* Cardinal Antonio Lamberto Rusconi, of a noble family of Bologna, was born in 1743. He joined the Franciscan Order, was made Cardinal in 1816, and had just been sent to Ravenna as a successor to the first Legate, Cardinal Malvasia, who had died in September 1819.

† The words 'prostitute' and 'sell' are legible in the copy of the letter in the Archives of the Sacra Rota.

nature of the subject obliges me to keep silent, avoiding the scandal of public controversy; so that, satisfied by public opinion, I am willing to trust myself to the conscience and justice of my superiors, among whom I recognize in your Most Reverend Eminence my defender, my judge, my . . .'

Here the letter breaks off. It would be interesting to know whether it was Teresa who destroyed the missing parts of this document. In the 'Vie' she makes no reference to this letter.

Nor did Count Gamba confine himself to writing letters: he sought out his son-in-law and challenged him to a duel. It seems to me that not enough attention has been given, in considering this story, to this very odd behaviour. Here is an honest and simple country gentleman, whose uprightness has never been called into question, and who until now had shown the most correct and natural disapproval of his daughter's liaison. It is probable that his letter to Byron, suggesting his return to Ravenna, was written in good faith, believing his daughter's protestations of a platonic relationship. But, when at last the storm broke, and no further doubt could remain in his mind, what was his course of action? First he sent a petition to the Pope for a decree of separation —then he wrote the letter to the Cardinal—and finally he challenged to a duel, not his daughter's lover, but her husband!* Is this not overwhelming evidence that what Teresa at last told him about her husband's behaviour, shocked him so deeply as to place him,—against all his principles and preconceptions—completely on her side?

With Byron, however, even at this point, Teresa does not seem to have been completely frank. A curious and not wholly comprehensible letter of his at this time which Teresa destroyed in part, suggests that his suspicions had been

* 'Yes, challenged him,' wrote Teresa in a marginal note to her copy of Moore's *Life*, 'and he would not have done so, if Count Guiccioli was not in the wrong and had not slandered and ill-treated me.'

reawakened about the nature of Teresa's relations with her husband. Was Guiccioli's hold upon her, he wondered, still so strong that she was in connivance with him even now? At this point he does indeed seem to have come very near to leaving Teresa for ever; and his letter, although not wholly explicit, reveals a most profound disquiet.

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

I had not the slightest suspicion, but your *anxiety*—your violence—awakened in me not *suspicion*, but *certainty*. The motive must be very strong—to shed *blood* in defence of a matter generally indifferent and known to all the world . . . Do you think that I am like vanity and indign . . . I blush for what I have suffered—for what you have seen me suffer on your account Even perfidious Italy to hide. . . .

I had the weakness to love you—I shall find strength to overcome a love of which everyone anticipated the consequences I am not surprised, but feel degraded. [five words erased] Farewell, one day you will know what you sacrificed. . . .

[on the back of the page]

This was written last night– I am sending it to show you to what a state you have brought me. Even in A.'s presence I could not control myself *

With his friends in England, however, Byron kept up his old flippant tone—referring to the duel as 'a superfluous valour, for he [Guiccioli] won't fight, though suspected of two assassinations'. He added that he had been warned, in consequence, not to take such long rides in the Pine Forest, alone and unarmed.

'They say here that he will have me taken off, it is the

* What is left of this undated letter is in three fragments Teresa appears first to have destroyed another page of the letter; then she cut several passages out of this page; and finally she put the remaining fragments into a folder entitled: *'Unjust letters—to be destroyed'*

custom . . . They pop at you from behind trees, and put a knife into your back in company, or in turning a corner, while you are blowing your nose. He may do as he pleases, I only recommend him not to miss, for if such a thing is attempted, and fails, he shan't have another opportunity, "Sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander" . . . I have taken no precaution (which indeed would be useless) except taking my pistols when I ride out in the woods every evening . . . A man's life is not worth holding on such a tenure as the fear of such fellows.'[59]

Undoubtedly Byron, who had plenty of nervous courage, was tickled in his sense of the picturesque by this idea, and enjoyed writing to all his friends about it. But it is doubtful whether the danger was ever very real—and the Guiccioli Memoirs mock at it as 'a flight of poetic fancy, another dream of a foreigner who knew little about us and was imbued with the romantic tales of a school that imagined the Italy of 1819 to be unchanged from that of the Borgias and the Farnese'.[60]

It was now evident to Byron that there was no hope of a reconciliation between Teresa and her husband, or of a tolerable life for her in his company. And at this critical juncture, it must be admitted, Byron behaved correctly. 'Now I can hesitate no longer. He may abandon you, but I never shall.' If we still catch a glimpse of his inner misgivings in his last warnings to go slowly, to speak first to her Papa, we can hardly consider them unnatural. Even now Teresa was only twenty-one—a headstrong young woman who knew nothing of the world beyond Ravenna, Venice and the convent of S. Chiara. Byron, as he told her, felt immeasurably her elder—'centuries older in experience'. He felt old, flat and sad; he embarked upon this new, permanent relationship with few illusions. But for the first time, he called himself her *husband*. Teresa, at last, had won.

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

Apres

*Promesse ! ! ! ! d'être mon Époux ! !**

My Love + My honest behaviour and my advice were what they were because I did not wish to hurry you—and put you in a situation where the greatest reciprocal sacrifices would be needed. A woman requires a great deal of character, the truest friendship, and the profoundest—and *untiring* love—proved often and for long—to decide on a course so disadvantageous in every way, and irrevocable for all the rest of her life. But as that man has persecuted you in words and deeds for injuries to which no one has *contributed,* and which no one has protected—more than he—now I can hesitate no longer.--He may abandon you—but I *never.*—I have *years* more than you in age—and as many *centuries* in sad experience; I foresee troubles and sacrifices for you, but they will be *shared*; my love—my duty—my honour—all these and everything should make me forever what I am *now,* your lover friend and (when circumstances permit) your *husband.*

P.S. Don't commit yourself for several *reasons*—which I have explained to you in part by word of *mouth,* but if he goes ahead I shall not fail you.

Speak to Papa first.

Après

My Love + Yes.—I hope to see you this evening—and very quickly recovered—calm yourself—and believe what I have always said. It was a real sacrifice for me—but nevertheless it was my duty to show you the consequences of your resolution.

I have two letters—one from Paris, the other from Bologna. The address of the French letter will make you laugh. Here they are.

Always and entirely your most loving friend

Après la decision

My Love + + + I have always said to you—that I did not wish to hurry things—but that once the matter was settled—

* This heading, with its exclamation marks, was written by Teresa.

you could command me. Now that we have reached this point, you will see that I have no fear or hesitation—and never have hesitated, except on *your account*. P. will have told you what I said about your affairs. I am not going to the Corso today—for I do not want to enjoy any diversion while my friend still is in the slightest trouble. Au revoir when you wish.

Believe me ever entirely yours

My Love + in 20 minutes I shall be free—and you can do what you think best.

I don't know what else to say to you—you will not hear reason and are committing yourself, for ever.

But I am

At last, after two long months of waiting, the Pope's answer came. On July 6th, Byron had written to Murray, returning to the swagger of some of his earlier letters:

'I have been the cause of a great conjugal scrape here—which is now before the *Pope* (seriously, I assure you) and what the decision of His Sanctity will be no one can predicate . . . The husband is the greatest man in these parts, with 100,000 Scudi a year, but he is a great Brunello in politics and private life—and is shrewdly suspected of more than one murder. The relatives are on my side because they dislike him. We wait the event.'*

By July 12th the news had come.

'The Pope has pronounced *their separation*. The decree came yesterday from Babylon—it was *she* and *her friends* who demanded it, on the ground of her husband's (the noble Count Cavalier's) extraordinary usage. *He opposed* it with all his might because of the alimony, which has been assigned,† with all her goods, chattels, carriage, etc., to be

* *L.J.*, V, pp. 47-8. To Murray, July 6th, 1820 'There has not been such a row in Romagna', he told Hobhouse on the same day, 'these hundred years.'

† Byron told Kinnaird that the alimony was of 'twelve hundred crowns a year . . . a handsome allowance for a lone woman in these parts, almost three hundred pounds sterling a year, and worth about

restored by him. In Italy they can't divorce. He insisted on her giving me up, and he would forgive everything—even the adultery, which he swears that he can prove by "famous witnesses". But in this country, the very courts hold such proofs in abhorrence, the Italians being as much more delicate in public than the English, as they are more passionate in private. The friends and relatives, who are numerous and powerful, reply to him—"You, yourself, are either fool or knave,—fool, if you did not see the consequences of the approximation of these two young persons—knave, if you connived at it. Take your choice,—but don't break out (after twelve months of the closest intimacy, under your own eyes and positive sanction) with a scandal which can only make you ridiculous and her unhappy.

He swore that he thought our intercourse was purely amicable, and that *I* was more partial to him than to her, till melancholy testimony proved the contrary. To this they answer, that 'Will of *this* Wisp' was not an unknown person, and that *Clamosa Fama* had not proclaimed the purity of my morals;—that *her* brother, a year ago wrote from Rome and warned him that his wife would infallibly be led astray by this *ignis fatuus*, unless he took proper measures, all of which he neglected to take, etc., etc. Now he says that he encouraged my return to Ravenna, to see *in quanti piedi d'acqua siamo* and he has found enough to drown him in.'[61]

When Teresa, twelve years later, read this letter in Moore's *Life*, she was very much upset. 'This word adultery is *cruel*,' she wrote in the margin, 'and could at least be sostituted [*sic*] by another less odious.' 'All his manner of expressing himself', she added, 'is the biggest proof how his own imagination could represent him the things in a quite different light than to others. He is almost always wrong in everything he says about the separation, which had not its source in jealousy or love, (which were but pretexts for Count G.)

a thousand in England'. Unpublished letter, of July 20th, 1820, see n. 59, p. 529.

but in incompatibility of the temper and in the ill conduct of the Count, which will be proved one day or other.'[62]

The Pope's decree, dated July 6th, 1820, stated unequivocally that Teresa was granted her separation because it was 'no longer possible for her to live in peace and safety with her husband'. The decree was sent to Countess Cecilia Machirelli Giordani at Pesaro, and from there was forwarded to Count Gamba at Filetto. Gamba at once sent it to his daughter, together with a letter to Teresa from Cardinal Rusconi, clearly explaining the conditions under which she would be allowed to return to her father's house.

July 14th, 1820

Most Illustrious Lady! His Holiness having been informed that your Ladyship has found herself in circumstances in which she can no longer live in peace and safety with her Husband, Cav. Alessandro Guiccioli, His Holiness has benignly condescended to authorize me to permit you to leave your Husband's House and to return to the House of your Father, Count Ruggero Gamba; so that you may live there in such laudable manner as befits a respectable and noble Lady separated from her Husband.

Further the Holy Father, in order that Your Ladyship may not be deprived of the necessary provisions and all that is requisite for the noble and decorous state of a Lady, condescends to assign you one hundred scudi a month, which shall be paid by the Husband in such manner and means as the integrity and providence of the Holy Father directs and shall be conveyed to you in future by the Cardinal Legate, the present writer, in fulfilment of the Sovereign Command.

Furthermore, it is the considered and express wish of the Holy Father that Your Ladyship, in leaving your Husband's house, shall take with her such linen, clothing and other objects as appertain to the decent adornment of a married Lady, as well as all that may be required for bed and board, following an inventory of these objects, to be signed by both parties, excepting valuables which your Ladyship did not bring

with her to her Husband's House, and which she received as gifts on the occasion of her Wedding.

The Cardinal Legate, in communicating these Sovereign decrees, consigns them with the truest and most distinguished esteem. A. CARD. RUSCONI[63]

To this letter Teresa at once replied:

Ravenna *July 15th*, 1820

Most Reverend Eminence: the favour accorded me by the Clemency of the Holy Father gives me back the peace I had lost and assures me a comfortable subsistence. Meanwhile, to avoid any unpleasant gossip or any other disagreeable consequences, I am going to the country with my Father, where I shall quietly await the instructions and benevolence of your Most Reverend Eminence.

I have the honour to kiss your Holy Purple.

Your Most Reverend Excellency's most humble, devoted and obedient Servant TERESA GUICCIOLI *née* GAMBA[64]

It was only on the following day that the news was sent by the Cardinal to Alessandro Guiccioli, together with a copy of the Pope's Orders, and an injunction 'not to delay in executing these Sovereign Orders'. The Count asked for a copy of the letter sent to Teresa, and of her answer, both of which were sent to him, but at the same time he was firmly told that 'any objections, or any steps he might care to take in the matter' should be addressed directly to Rome, since, the Order having been given directly by His Holiness, the Ravenna Legation would be unable to interfere in the matter.[65]

Count Guiccioli, however, was not so easily discouraged. He immediately gathered together his eighteen servants, drew up for their signature their evidence against Teresa, which has already been quoted, and sent it off to Rome. He also persuaded twelve of his most respectable fellow-citizens,—including some of the judges of the Ravenna Legation—five members of the Criminal Court, a parish priest, and the

family doctor—to sign another document, testifying—almost in the same words as the servants—that Guiccioli 'had always shown to his Lady Consort every attention of a most loving husband', that he and his wife had always been seen together 'at the carriage parade or in the Corso, at the Conversazioni, and in Church', and that the only cause of the interruption of this domestic harmony had been Guiccioli's jealousy of Lord Byron, whose lease he had then tried to break. And finally—the italicizing is Guiccioli's—that '*never had the Cavaliere been an exacting husband* ("indiscreto marito") *and even in the last period had shown her every due respect*'.[66] His case, which was sustained with equal vehemence by his children's advocate after his death—was based on the assertion that a justified jealousy of Byron was his *only* quarrel with his wife; in all other respects he had been an admirable husband.

At the end of the whole strange story, and also taking into consideration Count Guiccioli's later behaviour to his wife, when she returned to him after Byron's death, we are forced to the conclusion that neither his version nor Teresa's hold the whole truth: the real key, perhaps, lay simply in Guiccioli's cold-blooded avarice. His wife was to him a piece of property like any other—and, like other property, should be made to prove a good investment.[67] Being a man of unusually strong will, he did at first gain a great hold over her; but when he attempted to use this for his own ends he encountered, where Byron was concerned, an unexpected resistance. Teresa, with regard to Byron, was totally and whole-heartedly disinterested. This Guiccioli could not forgive.

But before the news of the Pope's decree reached Count Guiccioli, Teresa was already safely in her father's country-house. Her last day in Palazzo Guiccioli—July 15th—must have been a singularly unpleasant one. She already had in her pocket a letter from her father, enclosing Cardinal Rusconi's, and telling her—'in order to avoid a violent scene or scandal'—to meet him outside the town that afternoon. But Guiccioli—possibly guessing that something was afoot—had given orders that none of the horses were to be taken out

that day. Both husband and wife, however, kept up, in the presence of their household, a formal appearance of harmony, and during dinner—according to the servant's evidence—'the Cavaliere himself served his Wife, as is customary with a Lady, and then made conversation on indifferent matters, with the courteous manners characteristic of both of them'.[68]

Two hours later—the faithful Morelli having succeeded in hiring a coach—Teresa stole out of Palazzo Guiccioli—for ever—and, accompanied only by her maid and Morelli, met her father on the road to Filetto. 'Thus', she wrote, 'took place the separation of which Lord Byron was the occasion, rather than the cause.'[69]

5 : FILETTO

When a man hath no freedom to fight for at home,
Let him combat for that of his neighbours.

BYRON

Count Gamba's country-house, Filetto, lay some fifteen miles south-west of Ravenna, in a wide, unbroken plain. It was a green land, rich in water. In Teresa's day a wide strip along the coast was still given up to the great pine-forest—'full of pastime and prodigality'—which stood in the midst of marshes and lagoons, the home of every sort of water-fowl—and, further inland, the fields were intersected by a network of canals and streams, flowing between grassy banks broad enough for a carriage to drive along. Beside one of these rivers, the Montone, and surrounded by a wide lawn, framed by an avenue of old olive-trees, stood Count Gamba's villa, a pleasant, spacious house built at the end of the seventeenth century. A wide double outer stairway of grey stone led up to the vast saloon on the first floor, which was open to the roof. The bedrooms of the second floor looked down on it, from windows and doors giving on to an upper gallery, so that when, on hot summer nights, these doors stood open, their occupants could talk agreeably with each other from their beds.* A mixture of old-fashioned splendour and discomfort marked the furnishing: beds and walls were hung with red damask, and there was an abundance of great Renaissance armchairs, of family portraits and holy pictures and *prie-Dieu*. But the stone floors were bare, there were few fire-places, and little protection from the chilly mists which, on autumn evenings, would creep up from the river. It was

* Young Lord Fitzharris, when he visited Teresa there in 1828, was somewhat taken aback by this 'Italian sans-façon'—and no less by the perpetual presence of Don Giovanni, 'a domestic Levite'. MALMESBURY, *Memoirs of an ex-Minister*, I, p. 32.

a summer house, and indeed it was chiefly in the summer that the Gambas lived there, in patriarchal fashion—a large, cheerful, easy-going family, devoted to each other and to their country pursuits. 'They might well', wrote Lord Malmesbury, 'have been called the Osbaldistones of Italy. They were all sportsmen according to their knowledge, which consisted of hunting a slow pointer, who stood woodcock and partridge equally well, through the forests and vineyards'[1] They also shot duck and snipe in the marshes, rode in the forest and fished in the river; they took an active interest and pride in the management of their estates; they entertained their country neighbours, and, as will appear, they came to find this secluded country-house a most convenient centre for their conspiratorial activities.

Here Teresa had lived as a child—sharing her brothers' and sisters' sports, riding with her father to visit the outlying farms, reading her poetry-books and dreaming her romantic dreams,—and here, after two years of married life, she now returned.*

The terms of the Pope's decree required, as we have seen, that she should live in her father's house 'in such a laudable manner as befits a respectable and noble lady separated from her husband', and this her father very naturally interpreted as meaning that Lord Byron should not be constantly in her pocket.

'She returns to her father's house,' wrote Byron, 'and I can only see her under great restrictions—such is the custom of the country The relations behave very well. I offered any settlement, but they refused to accept it, and swear she *shan't* live with G. (as he has tried to prove her faithless) but that he shall maintain her.'[2]

* The villa was completely destroyed by the Germans, who blew up most of the houses and farms on the canal banks in 1944. Nothing now remains but a few steps of the great staircase. The chapel, too, where Count Ruggero Gamba was buried, was partially destroyed and looted.

Byron, on his side—in spite of all that had occurred,—remained in the Palazzo Guiccioli—and, although the Count sent him notice to quit, firmly refused to move.

For nearly two months, according to Teresa, the lovers did not meet. They did, however, exchange letters—brief on Byron's part and long on Teresa's—every two or three days. Byron's letters, which Teresa kept with meticulous care, had changed very greatly from those that he was writing to her a year before, or even during the spring at Palazzo Guiccioli. The note of frustrated passion and uncertainty has disappeared, giving place to an affectionate but faintly condescending ease,—and also, it must be admitted, to a certain dullness. Teresa has become his 'gossip', his 'duck'; he tells her that he is preparing Villa Bacinetti for 'the two little girls,—Allegra and you'; he teases her about her age and laughs at her long sentimental letters. There is a good deal about the servants, a little Ravenna gossip; there are numerous half-veiled allusions to their love-making, and excuses for his delayed visits– and there really is not much else.

As to Teresa's answers, only three of this period have been preserved—but a later letter of Byron's, at the time of his move to Pisa, declared that they were at least five hundred.[n] It had taken him, he complained, at least two hours to sort and tie them up. Two of the letters which still remain, however—the one about *Adolphe* and the one about Byron's *Farewell*—throw a new light upon their relationship. They show a Teresa both shrewder and more independent than she has yet appeared; devotedly attached to Byron, and yet capable, on occasion, of standing up to him; sentimental, but no longer blind.

The first of Byron's letters to Filetto—written on the day after Teresa's departure—describes Guiccioli's ill-humour on discovering that his wife had departed. It was taken to her by two of Byron's most trusted servants, his cook Valeriano, and Luigi Morelli. The folder containing her letters is inscribed by Teresa: 'Le désir et le devoir de faire connaitre sous cet aspect de bonté, de raison, de vrai sentiment de cœur Ld. B.,

peut seul faire vaincre la repugnance qu'on eprouve a mettre le monde dans la confidence'

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

Ravenna *July 15th*, 1820

My Love + Hardly had you left than the whole town knew of your departure.—I went for my usual ride and upon my return was informed that the Pig of St. Stephen* (you know that St. Anthony had a similar one, but blessed, and cleaner than the animal in question) had appeared with a fairly black and surly snout, which I do not think will become any more cheerful tomorrow, when he learns the consequences to his pocket. He is now at the theatre—his solace and delight. I send you Valeriano, begging you to keep him with you for the present—for *my satisfaction*—as well as Luigi—until we know something more. Don't trouble yourself to answer, but do not humiliate me by sending back Valeriano, whom I trust very much. I am expecting your news and *superior orders.*—I will do what you wish—but I hope that in the end *we may be happy.*—Of my love you cannot doubt—let yours continue. – Remember me to Count G[amba] your father and I am always your most

P.S. It is said that A[lessandro] cuts a poor figure. Write to me in the finest style of Santa Chiara. Very naughty O. + + + + + + + Be very careful!!

Ravenna *July 17th*, 1820

My Love, + + + Your dearest letter was brought to me by P. yesterday evening.- -He is leaving almost at once—so I have only a few minutes in which to answer you; but you will forgive me.—

What people are thinking—what they are saying—it would

* S. Antonio Abate, as opposed to St. Anthony of Padua, was always depicted in the company of a pig. Byron's reference is to Guiccioli, who was a Cavaliere di S. Stefano (Knight of St. Stephen). Teresa seems subsequently to have felt that it was in somewhat bad taste, for she has tried to erase the words 'pig' and 'animal' writing over these words the letters 'N.N.'

be difficult for me to guess, as I do not go about, nor shall I do so, except for my usual rides on horseback, until we two are able to go into Society together.—I have refused to go to the theatre—as I did when you were still here.—Papa will be able to give you private and political news; of the latter we know nothing more.—The Lugano Gazette says that, our Queen having rejected every peace proposal, the House of Lords has begun the trial.* I would not have troubled you with so much had you not asked for *'political news'*.—P. will tell you what he thinks about my *visits* just now—but if you are not convinced, I will obey you—as I should.—I write in very great haste.—Keep Valeriano without compunction—I have found a temporary under-cook who is marvellously successful with trifles—*ducks* (without onions—I expect you said it as a joke) and even with cakes—so I am not fasting.—

I have finished the tragedy[4]—now comes the work of revision—and I have no copyist.—

Meanwhile I keep busy—and in the hope of finding you again with a love still not much inferior to mine, I shall always be your + + +

P.S. *Sandri* says the decree 'is a bestial decree'—this is the consequence of not having given that wretch the 60 scudi he asked for. That is what men are like—if you do not help them they hate you—and if you do they hate you the more for having had the power and means of doing so. Louis XIV of France was right in saying that every time he granted a favour, 'he made a hundred men discontented, and one ungrateful'.

But as to Sandri—I shall find a way of punishing him. There is a certain . . .? no?—I feel as if I could hear it. *Ricordati di me che son la Pia.*

Lega greets you humbly—he is being scolded a good deal by his amiable master. Elisei makes the round of the boxes

* This was the trial, before the House of Lords, of Queen Caroline, who was accused of adultery with her Italian courier, Bergami. Most of the witnesses were Italian grooms or servants, and it was believed that many of them had been bribed. The trial—which aroused great popular feeling against King George IV—lasted from June to November, and ended with the Queen's acquittal. See p. 286.

without getting any nearer to the 'desired nest'—some assemblies are being given for Donzelli, but not as good as they were for the Morandi and the Cortesi.*—I have sent the medicine to the Cardinal, and if he takes it properly it will do him good—I think. But I told him to send for the surgeon Rima before taking it.—

Yesterday a priest of Faenza was assassinated—and a factor of Alessandro's.—

Tomorrow the theatre ends—but you knew that before you left.—Goodbye ✝ + ✝

Ravenna *July 18th*, 1820

My Love + Truly I know nothing, since I see no one but Elisei on my usual rides—and he is now too busy about an accident of his own to think about us or about his country. Jumping with me yesterday in the fields, he fell with his horse—and hurt an eye—not very badly—but enough to disfigure him in society for a few days. The worst of it is, that [Elisei] being a great horseman in his own opinion (and rightly, for he rides well), by chance a great many spectators in carriages were present and witnessed his misadventure —consequently his pride has been no less injured than his eye.—His cap, his clothes—and all his equipment down to [illegible—paper torn]— his spurs were also half-spoiled by the fall which was rather heavy Fortunately for him there was some grass and no stones

Your letter has given me the first news about A[lessandro]'s conversation with the Cardinal and Alborghetti.— From this you will realize that I know nothing about what you say and ask—this is all gossip that will not last more than a few days —It would be a fine thing if you could not have a servant because he served me before going to you! †

* Domenico Donzelli was an opera singer The reference is to the benefit night for the singer, Rosa Morandi, a week before (on July 11th) who was honoured in a most sensational manner, with the streets of the city illuminated, fireworks, a 'golden rain in the theatre'. Carolina Cortesi was also an opera singer.

† Teresa had written saying that she had heard there had been

Guiccioli told Lega this morning that he did not want to pursue the lawsuit about *the house*—I have replied that it was for him to bring it to an end.

About our separation I don't know what to say to you—you know what I want—but the decision must depend on you and on your family. For my part (if you will) we will live together and send A. and his alimony to*

I have not been very well these days, owing to the great heat, but am better today.

Thank you *very* much for your roses which are still fresh—I *kissed* them and at once put them in fresh water.

You are afraid for me– I don't know why—but what can I do about it?—What will be, will be—and one place is not safer than another Look after yourself well—this matters much more to me than myself, or anything that can happen to me. Papa will keep you informed about the gossip (if there is any) but remember that it will be over in a month, whether it is good or bad —This evening is Donzelli's benefit night, but I have not gone to it– pray love me and believe me your most sincere and loving + + + + + + +

Ravenna *July 23rd*, 1820

My Love: I don't think you have done right in present circumstances in sending Luigi back– and it won't be much use —I shall send him off again this evening.

You need not be afraid of violence against me—you *yourself* have more to fear from your *husband*, this I *know*– and therefore I beg you to keep your servants always about your person—when you go out.—As to the news, Luigi will give you all of it—domestic and political —I don't know anything –A Papal guard has been wounded, a comedy has arrived, that is all that I have learnt in these days

I am writing in a great hurry, so as not to keep the servant

gossip in Ravenna because she had taken into her service the two men servants (Luigi and Valeriano) whom Byron had sent to her.

* The paper has perished or has purposely been torn.

waiting.—Elisei has recovered from his wound, but not from his wounded pride.—I do not know what else to say, except that *I love you—and I shall always love you*—but when we shall see each other again, it is not in my power to decide.—With a twister like the Cavaliere one can know nothing—and count on nothing—He turns round and round like a clown, and as effectively.

I am well, except for a little pain in one hand—from having fired an over-primed pistol the day before yesterday in the Pine-forest —

I am sending you some other books—and am always your most sincere and loving.

Ravenna *July 24th*, 1820

My Love · Don't be afraid— I assure you that it was only for amusement that I discharged my pistols in the Pineta and not in self-defence against an assassin—my servants had over-charged them and I suffered a little pain in one hand—which is already gone.—

I have sent away three servants, because, instead of doing their duty, they went to the tavern—a little before midnight—an insufferable thing—leaving eight horses, harness, three carriages etc, at that time of night with nobody to look after them—But if you want me to—I shall have to forgive them.—

You are not obliged, my love, to read all those books—I thought you were like me—I like sometimes to read one book and sometimes another, a few pages at a time,—and change frequently, that is, change *books*—but nothing else except *linen*—since I am the essence of fidelity—I wrote to you yesterday in a bad humour;—not seeing you has upset me—and a thousand other things—little things, but tiresome, household matters; the heat, etc.

I have no particular news from England—the Gazettes are full of our blessed Queen—it is a fine thing that in this world one cannot be loved in peace—without all this fuss!—Her Majesty has put the morals of my very moral country in great danger and scandal.[5] They seem deteriorated already, for I

read in the Gazette of an Irish lady of 37 who has run away with a young Englishman of 24—leaving behind a husband of 50 and a daughter of 16.

I kiss you ten thousand times + + + and console myself with the thought that in any case we shall see each other soon.

Love me—I am always yours

Ravenna *July 26th*, 1820

My Love + + + + + I at once sent a message to Giulio Rasponi about the villeggiatura* but he says that Countess Capra wants it for herself—and that he cannot do it without her consent.—Very naughty O—so you have become a huntress, but it is not a good beginning to kill the poor dogs.—You cannot desire me and want me back more than I do you—Love stings me very much, without counting the cake [some words erased] but let us hope that soon we shall be able to arrange something—the Cavaliere is spreading rumours—that you have been here to visit me—(would it were so!)—that he has found some letters of mine that he has had impounded—that he wants to sue me—and a *thousand other* fantastic designs. One thing is certain—he is seeking (and in some people finding) witnesses to say that he did not seem to be *ill-treating* you.—But who can ever know! Neither the public nor one's friends—for these are family matters, at home.†

The Play is here but I have not been to it. I have been riding—and firing pistols—I read and write—that is all!

This separation from you inconveniences me greatly - you understand.

Lega tells me that Fanny has produced another bastard—a

* Teresa had been urging Byron to take a villa in the country, so as to avoid the dangers of contracting fever in the Ravenna midsummer air—and also, no doubt, so as to bring him nearer to her. But the danger of fever was real—a form of malaria—and before the summer was over poor little Allegra had caught it.

† The reference is to the evidence that Guiccioli had sent off to Rome the day before and shows how very well-informed everyone in Ravenna was, about everyone else's affairs! See chapter IV, p. 221.

boy—whom I believe she is to present to the Venice hospital —I advised him to send Aspasia too,—it would be one ugly . . . the less in that not over beautiful family.—

The other 'cadreghe'* (this is not a word of Santa Chiara's but of St. Mark's) have come from Forlì with some other stuff—fine—but they want too much money and Lega has had to take some furious scoldings

Pray forgive all this nonsense and believe me your most + + + +

P.S Yes, my Duck—I have understood you—with all your + + + poor child! I hope that we shall fulfil all these wishes of ours very soon– have a little more patience.

Ravenna *July 29th*, 1820

My love + + + + I like your little brother very much—he shows character and talent—Big eyebrows! and a stature which he has enriched, I think, at your expense– at least in those . . . do you understand me?† His head is a little too hot for revolutions—he must not be too rash

If A[lessandro] wants to make peace, I hope he will give you a *constitution* first—that being now the fashion with tyrants [6]

I am sending you a letter from Monaco, from a certain Baronessa Miltitz, who wants to correspond with me, she must be a mad literary lady—do you want me to answer her?—

There is some hope of Villa Colombani—I shall do everything possible, as you know, to get it I am writing in the greatest haste – for Papa is leaving in a few minutes —Lega is here—I am using him as a dictionary— when I need a word —I ask him Pray continue your love for me—and always believe me your most sincere and loving + + + + +

Pietro Gamba had returned from Rome—bringing with him a breath of youth, of patriotism and of disinterested enthu-

* 'Chairs', in Venetian dialect

† Byron is presumably referring to his lady's legs, which were rather short

siasm. 'Pierino' is, indeed, perhaps the most sympathetic figure in the whole story. A gentle, handsome young man—feminine in the quickness of his enthusiasms and intuitions, but with plenty of courage and enterprise—he possessed a desire for adventure and a passion for the abstract idea of liberty, equal to Byron's own. 'A very fine, brave fellow', was Byron's own later description of him, '(I have seen him put to the proof) and wild about liberty.'[7]

So far Pietro has only appeared 'off-stage'—writing to warn Teresa of the dangers of her liaison, and sending anxious letters of protest to his father and brother-in-law. But beneath his moralizing, it is possible to discern more than a little curiosity about the wicked English Lord,—traveller and pirate, seducer and adventurer,—against whom he was warning his sister. And when, still divided between disapproval and curiosity, he at last returned to Ravenna, he too, like the rest of the family, succumbed to the Byronic charm. From that day, until his premature death in Greece, he remained Byron's enthusiastic, disinterested—and unfailingly practical—disciple. Moreover he possessed to a remarkable degree a quality which the poet, being himself devoid of it, seldom elicited from his friends: a simple and uncritical loyalty.

To Byron Pietro's arrival upon the scene must have been exceedingly refreshing He liked, indeed, the whole Gamba stock. He was attracted by their manners, by their physical appearance, and by a certain warmth and naturalness that was common to them all. Teresa describes his affection for her little sisters, who used sometimes, in Ravenna, to drive out with her into the Pineta to watch Byron shooting. 'Byron caressed them affectionately, and said that he liked *le beau sang* of the family; he felt as if he had become part of it.'[8] Pietro, too, was exceedingly like his sister—with the further advantage of not belonging to 'the absurd race of women'—and of taking his romance (for he, too, was a romantic) in a different way. The boy's enthusiasm, the quick flush that mounted to his cheeks as soon as he was excited, his headlong speech, his candour, his disarming modesty—these were qualities that Byron had not encountered for a

long time. They took him back to the first friendships of his youth—with Long, with Clare. In a few days he was treating Pietro with the half-humorous, half-impatient affection of an elder brother. They rode together in the forest, they practised marksmanship and fencing; they planned the overthrow of Austria and the banishment of the barbarians For although Byron might smile with Teresa at her 'little brother's' hot head, his own was hardly much cooler. What he and Pietro dreamed of together was 'the very *poetry* of politics'[9]—the fulfilment, after so many centuries, of the Italian 'unquenched longing after independence' Now, at last, they believed that longing would find expression in action.

'There is THAT brewing in Italy', Byron wrote to Murray, 'which will speedily cut off all security of communication, and set all your Anglo-travellers flying in every direction . . . I shall, if permitted by the natives, remain to see what will come of it, and perhaps to take a turn with them, for I shall think it by far the most interesting spectacle and moment in existence, to see the Italians send the Barbarians of all nations back to their own dens I have lived long enough among them to feel more for them as a nation than for any other people in existence [10]

The revolutionary movement, however, which was arousing such high hopes, was still— as Byron was well aware—in an exceedingly chaotic state 'They want Union and they want principle',[11] wrote Byron of his fellow-conspirators, and he was only echoing the thoughts of their own leaders. 'Liberi non siem,' cried Manzoni, 'se non siam uni'[12] And Foscolo, writing in 1821 to the Countess of Albany, had bitterly ascribed all the troubles of his fellow-countrymen to their not knowing themselves what they really wanted

'It seems as if their intellectual energies were sharpened only for chatter, for discontent with everything and everyone . . . Experience has not been able to hammer into their wooden heads the old tale, as old, I believe, as Adam, which is: that the man who does not know what he wants must resign himself to doing what others want Our nobles want and do not want the omnipotence of the priests, the priests

want the Inquisition, but do not want the monks; the monks hope to reacquire a hold over men's consciences, but fear the competition of the Jesuits; the well-off want well-paid jobs, but want to pay only a third of the taxes, and the people want bread that only costs three halfpence a pound. And each of them believes that the rulers of Europe have taken arms in order to redress his individual wrongs!'[13]

During the early part of the spring Byron had been too much absorbed in his own private life to pay much attention to the state of the country, but since in Italy no matter is so personal that it does not become tinged with politics, both Liberals and Clericals had taken sides in his affairs—Monsignor Marini influencing Guiccioli, as we have seen, to bring matters to a head and get this dangerous foreigner out of the city, and the Liberals protecting him. It is improbable that Byron himself was aware of the amount of intriguing that was going on, although in one letter to Teresa he did suggest that some of the slanders were aimed against her family, on political grounds, as well as against herself. But his natural sympathies were with the Liberals, and when Pietro Gamba arrived—fresh from Rome and Naples and bearing news of the progress of the rising in the South—he was already prepared to become something more than a detached and amused spectator.

'We are here', he wrote to Murray, 'upon the eve of evolutions and revolutions. Naples is revolutionized, and the ferment is among the Romagnuoles, by far the bravest and most original of the present Italians, though still half savage. Buonaparte said the troops from Romagna were the best of his Italic corps, and I believe it. The Neapolitans are not worth a curse, and will be beaten if it comes to fighting: the rest of Italy, I think, might stand.'[14]

The Neapolitan rising, which was to awaken such disproportionate hopes in the Liberals all over Italy, was, as events proved, a very minor episode: a farce rather than a tragedy. While the Carboneria, in Sicily and Calabria, had become a genuine popular movement, in Naples it was merely a party, consisting almost entirely of the prosperous but discontented

middle classes. Some of its members were well-to-do bourgeois who resented the Bourbons' taxes, but the greater part were veterans of the Napoleonic wars, who wanted promotion, or provincial clerks and prelates who required better jobs, to whom must be added a small handful of genuine Liberal idealists and some mere adventurers. The Bourbon government against which they were plotting was perhaps the weakest, most suspicious and most inefficient in Europe; it was also, as it soon showed, the most timid.

The rising began on the smallest possible scale: on the evening of July 2nd a little group of deserters—two lieutenants and 127 cavalry troopers, accompanied by a priest, Don Menichini, and twenty civilians, marched out of the barracks of the little town of Nola along the road which leads to Avellino, crying 'Long live God!' 'Long live the King!' 'Long live the Constitution!' King Ferdinand Ist of Naples happened to be at sea, on the way to meet his son in Sicily; and the news of this very mild insurrection terrified him so much, that it was only with the greatest difficulty that he was persuaded to return home. He said, however, that he dared not send any of his generals against the rebels, because he did not trust their loyalty; the generals said that they themselves did not trust their soldiers, the soldiers certainly did not trust their generals; and thus four days passed, during which the original handful of insurgents was joined by other groups from Avellino and the neighbouring cities, who put themselves under the command of the magniloquent and theatrical Napoleonic veteran, General Guglielmo Pepe. By now the king and the Government were thoroughly frightened, and when, on the night of July 5th, five Carbonari made their way to the Palace in Naples, asked to speak to the king and demanded a Constitution within two hours, they immediately obtained what they wanted The Constitution was proclaimed the next morning, and General Pepe's 'army'—now swollen by all the rabble of the province—triumphantly made its entry into Naples, headed by the 'sacred squadron' of the Nola deserters, while Don Menichini, clothed as a priest, but carrying arms and adorned with all the insignia of

the Carbonari, was followed by 7000 civilians. The king, meanwhile, lay trembling in bed in his palace; and three-coloured cockades (of the colours of the Carboneria, red, blue and black) made by the royal princesses themselves, were distributed to the crowd. Within a few days there was a reception at Court, at which the chief rebels, notably General Pepe, kissed the king's hand; sonnets were written by Don Menichini, and copies of his portrait sold by thousands in the streets of Naples. On October 1st the Neapolitan Parliament (consisting almost entirely of members of the middle class—priests, lawyers and small landowners, all Carbonari) was opened. Such was the revolution which the Carbonari of the North regarded as the dawn of liberty and independence —such the army on which they counted, to oppose the power of Austria.

The first news of these events was brought back to the Romagna, with many details not to be found in the Gazettes. by Pietro Gamba and an advocate of Faenza called Cicognani*—and at once the Romagnoli conspirators were roused to fresh hopes—and sporadic acts of violence. By midsummer Byron was writing: 'Here there are as yet but the sparks of the volcano; but the ground is hot, and the air sultry Three assassinations last week here and at Faenza—an anti-liberal priest, a factor and a trooper last night,—I heard the pistol-shot that brought him down within a short distance of my own door. There had been quarrels between the troops and people of some duration: this is the third soldier wounded within the last month There is a great commotion in people's minds, which will lead to nobody knows what.'[15]

In these activities the Gamba family was deeply involved. Count Ruggero Gamba, indeed, was an old hand at revolutions. After the departure of the French in 1814 he had gone

* Avvocato Cicognani had been sent from Faenza to Naples to find out the intentions of the Neapolitans with regard to the Romagna, and to tell them of the preparations that were being made to rise against the Government, as soon as the Neapolitan army arrived. On his return he became one of the leaders of the Romagna conspirators. PIERANTONI, *I Carbonari dello Stato Pontificio.*

for a while into exile, and on his second return home he had become a leading spirit of the Romagna branch of the Carbonari, together with his son Pietro and his nephew Antonio Cavalli. Both he and Pietro were considered by the Austrian and Papal governments *pecore segnate* (black sheep), and were under police supervision. And now Byron—already sufficiently suspect—joined them, and was soon made the head of one of the local bands, that of the *Cacciatori Americani*.

'The "*Mericani*", of whom they call me the "Capo" (or chief) means "Americans", which is the name given in Romagna to a part of the Carbonari, that is to say, to the *popular* part, the *troops* of the Carbonari. They were originally a society of hunters in the forest, who took that name of Americans, but at present comprise some thousands, etc.; but I shan't let you further into the secret, which may be participated with the postmasters'[16]

Byron's band—the *Cacciatori Americani*—belonged to the third and popular section of the Ravenna Carbonari, which was also known as 'la turba'. All over the country, within the last two years, such bands of conspirators had been springing up—many of them with high-flown names suggesting a direct link with the Freemasons, such as the '*Guelfi*', '*Ulelfi*' '*Maestri Perfetti*' '*Latinisti*', and '*Massoni Riformati*' Then there were the '*Figli di Marte*', the '*Ermolaisti*' the '*Fratelli Artisti*' the '*Illuminati*', at Cesena the '*Difensori della Patria*' (Defenders of their Country), at Forlì the '*Figli dell'Onore*' (Sons of Honour), and at Ravenna itself the '*Società degli Amici del Dovere*' (Society of the Friends of Duty)[17] By the spring of 1820 it was said that over 15,000 men were secretly enrolled in the Romagna.

In reading the history of the Carbonari, it is impossible not to observe the marked similarities between the conspirators of that day and the Partisans of the recent war. In the 1820s as in the 1940s a sincere purpose was often obscured by bombastic rhetoric, and fine plans brought to nought by a muddled execution. There was a similar conspiratorial setting, a similar enthusiasm, a similar volume of talk. In both periods

genuine patriots were fighting beside mere political agitators, fools or scoundrels, and deeds of true heroism alternated with behaviour that was both foolish and purposeless.

Perhaps, after all, it is not so very astonishing. Most conspiracies, wherever they may take place, seem to affect their adherents in much the same way—or perhaps it would be truer to say, that all conspiracies attract to themselves the same kind of human beings. 'The temperament of conspirators', wrote an acute Italian historian of the last century, 'greatly resembles that of lovers. It is not their fault, but the fault of their profession. Their vision is restricted, and generally it is also falsified—for the object of their passion occupies them entirely. In this object resides all good, beauty and truth; everything else is evil, false and ugly.'[18] Like lovers, too, they live in a twilight world of secret meetings and whispered passwords, where everything is a little more vivid, a little more intense, than reality. They meet behind locked doors, or in lonely woods at nightfall, always on the watch for an enemy footstep, scanning each man's face to guess if he may be a spy. Their sense of proportion is seldom equal to their courage; each scrap of news, every vague rumour, takes on a fictitious importance; all colours are intensified, all shadows blackened. Each little band becomes an army, each ruler a villainous tyrant. Moreover, the conspirator, in every period, has a dangerous satisfaction: the sense of secret power. The very complication of his life—spying and counter-spying, lying and treachery, opening of letters and listening at doors, but all done for 'the good cause'—these things lead even a little man to feel that he is a great one.

Here is a description,—by an 'old Carbonaro of Ravenna', Primo Uccellini—of the ceremony by which he, as a mere schoolboy, was admitted into one of the local branches of the Society.

'It was in 1818, that is, the time when the Carboneria was flourishing everywhere. Italy was a hotbed of sects which had various names, but all aimed at the same goal: the abolition of absolute monarchy. In Ravenna the Carboneria was divided

into three branches: the first was given the name of *Protettrice* (Protectress), because it controlled the others; the second that of *Speranza* (Hope) because it was composed chiefly of young students; and the third, because it included a mixture of all sorts of people, mostly workmen, and was the most prepared for action, was named *Turba* (Mob).'[19]

Uccellini, who had already, although only a schoolboy, written some fiery verses against tyranny, was admitted into the branch called *Speranza,* and was taken one night into the house of the head of the local lodge, where he was at once blindfolded.

'An imposing voice asked me various questions, and when I had given my word that I was prepared for any sacrifice for my country's good, and wished to take an active part in the overthrow of *Tyranny,* I was made to place my hand on a naked dagger, and take the prescribed oath. After this, my bandage was taken off, and I saw that I was surrounded by a fence of daggers—while old Andrea Garavini, who directed the meeting, said in a loud voice: "All these daggers will be for your defence in every encounter, if you hold your oath sacred, but they will be turned to your damage and destruction if you fail. The traitor's penalty is death." '[20]

Byron would scarcely have gone to meetings such as these; but he did attend some others, both in the pine forest, in Ravenna, and at Filetto. There he met not only the other conspirators of Ravenna—decent working men of Republican principles like old Andrea Garavini the blacksmith, the jovial inn-keeper Bucina, Giacomo Batuzzi, who later on followed the Gambas in exile to Pisa, and that adventurous merchant, Vincenzo Gallina, who eventually made his way to Greece—but also the representatives of the neighbouring cities, Vincenzo Fattiboni from Cesena, Laderchi and Ginnasi from Faenza, Orselli from Forlì and Hercolani from Bologna. And besides these genuine patriots of all classes, there were a number of hot-headed, irresponsible boys, a few adventurers and criminals—and, inevitably, some spies and informers.

It was a strange mixture of human beings, and very alien must Byron have seemed among them all: the great English

Mylord—so proud, so eccentric, and yet so anxious to do his share—so friendly when he chose, so generous. But he was irascible, according to Teresa, at the meetings; he would call for less talk and quicker action, for a concerted plan. Now, as later on with his Greek allies, he felt for his fellow-conspirators a mixture of sympathy and exasperation. But, in Italy as in Greece, he *identified* himself with them. His occasional abuse, as Mr. Nicolson has pointed out, 'was not the superficial contempt of the healthy English wayfarer, but the determined incitation of an angered, intelligent, but sympathetic friend'.[21]

For some weeks nothing further happened, and Byron's letters to Teresa again refer only to personal matters.

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI*

Ravenna *August 3rd*, 1820

My Love + + + My daughter is ill. I have sent away the old woman—Lega has taken into the house a certain Clara of whom I know nothing.—Lega will answer for his own sins—I can only answer for mine—and hardly for those.—

I have looked and am looking for a country house, but it cannot yet be found.

Guiccioli has no right to sham *blindness*—after your last year's letter of which he sent a copy to Count Pietro—If he did not notice anything then,—he should never have done so—That was the moment to say, 'Make your choice'—and not eight months later—it seems to me that your feelings were already evident.

Papa will make you laugh about the break between Lieutenant Elisei and me—the buffoon has at last done what I hoped for often enough (but did not know how to accomplish)—he has taken upon himself to be offended because I would not buy a *writing-desk* from an artist protected by him.—Poor fool—he wanted to run my house and found he couldn't.

* On the upper left-hand corner of the page is written: '. . . [torn] like you in the Convent'. The missing word must be 'rabbioso', in a rage. See letter of August 7th.

I am writing in a hurry, and am always yours + + + +
P.S. My respects to Count P.

The daughter of Rasponi's coachman has been taken into my house to look after the child.

Ravenna *August 3rd*, 1820

Allegrina's illness can be confirmed by Dr Rasi and by Count Ruggero.—She is very ill.—As to the child's maid, Lega will answer you. All that I have to answer for—is that I have never been *below stairs* and that I am not in the habit of going there.———

Yesterday a letter from Hobhouse told me that all the Peers who are absent from the Queen's trial* will be condemned to a *fine* or to the Tower (a State prison)—in spite of which I do not think of going—but I do not think I should be rewarded for the trouble I am facing for someone else's sake, by the reproofs of the very person who is causing it.

The child's maid says (I forgot to tell you) that she would not take service in Guiccioli's house—because a poor opinion is held of the Cavaliere everywhere and by everyone.—I cannot go into all the reasons- leaving such things to the steward

My law-suit is going forward

Villa Spreti is already taken—and we are thinking of moving in next week.

I am always yours

August 5th, 1820

My Love· I have received the flowers- and the book—and thank you for everything—Yesterday I wrote to you in reply to yours.

If Luigi does not suit you—take another man—only I cannot receive him into my household—we are already too

* Hobhouse was greatly disappointed by Byron's refusal to attend the trial. 'You should really if you can come over', he had written in July, 'to do an act of justice for this "Mobled Queen". It would be a great thing if a person like you who has lived so long in Italy would lend your powerful assistance against this most odious persecution'. JOYCE, *My Friend H.*, p. 154

many—and if he remains without employment you know what the probable consequences will be—since that man knows about all our affairs. Lega has gone today to Villa Spreti—the child has a fever and rather high.

I saw Papa yesterday—I am always

Byron's next letter—after laughing at one of Teresa's frequent attacks of jealousy—refers to an agreement suggested by mutual friends. It appears that there had been some trouble over the objects which Teresa—interpreting somewhat freely the Pope's phrase about 'such things as appertain to the decent ornament of a married lady'—had taken away with her from Palazzo Guiccioli; and it was now proposed that an amicable agreement should be reached, by which nothing more would be said about these things, but Teresa's allowance would be reduced from 100 to 60 scudi a month. On August 17th, indeed, this agreement was signed, and in a letter to the Cardinal, Count Gamba hinted at the considerations which had influenced him. 'This conciliatory agreement', he said, 'may perhaps in future bring about a complete reunion—although it could not at present be prudently recommended, in view of everybody's state of mind.'[22]

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

Ravenna *August 7th*, 1820

My Love + + + 'Forget what has happened', you say—a fine forgetfulness—but what then did happen? The woman is as ugly as an ogre—a thing of Lega's—not very young—not of bad reputation—not adorned with the slightest quality that might arouse a caprice. But you have condescended to be jealous—which I shall not so easily forget, as you so *generously* forgive yourself. It is a very naughty O: I feel it.

Allegrina has already spoiled your present—breaking one of the little carriages. Her fever is a little better. I shall not go to my fair country of NO—unless you are jealous of filthy maids—in which case I shall.

I think you should neither accept nor refuse Guiccioli's

proposal without thinking it over. Perhaps one could do this—reply that he should *assign you* 2000 *scudi* after his death, and in return you would be prepared to give up 400 of the 1200 decreed by the most just of all Popes Freedom would be a great thing, no doubt—with that head of yours—but 400 scudi is a respectable sum in this country—and not to be given up without any compensation. For the rest—you can trust me—I will make you independent of everyone—at least during my lifetime But you are made angry by the mere idea- and want to be independent on your own and to write '*Cantate*' in lengthy epistles in the style of Santa Chiara the convent where you were said to be always in a rage *

I am reading the second volume of the proposal of that classical cuckold Perticari.† It may be well-written—in a style worthy of Santa Chiara and the *trecento*—but it would be more à propos if the Count, instead of proving that *Dante* was the greatest of men (which no one at present wishes to deny, as he is now all the fashion) could prove to his contemporaries that his father-in-law Monti‡ is not the most vile and infamous of men, and such a dishonour to talent itself, that a man of ability ought to blush to belong to the same century as that Judas of Parnassus

This seems to have become a *cantata* or at least would be in English but my thoughts fail me when I must express myself in the effeminate words of the language of musicians.

* Byron wrote rabbiosa (in a rage), which Teresa has attempted to change into studiosa (studious)

† Count Giulio Perticari (1790 1822) the son in law of the poet Vincenzo Monti, whose wife was notoriously unfaithful to him, was one of the defenders of the classicists, against the new-fangled romantics The work referred to is *Dell amor patrio di Dante* (1820)

‡ The reference is to Monti's political unreliability He was, like his son in law, unfortunate in his matrimonial relations, a fact on which Byron commented in his *Prophecy of Dante*, in lines omitted in the earlier editions of Byron's Poems, but quoted by Moore.

> The prostitution of his Muse and wife,
> Both beautiful, and both by him debased,
> Shall salt his bread and give him means of life

I am in a rage this evening—as you were in the convent.—I kiss and embrace you 100000000———— times. Love me.

P.S. There is a certain O—I feel it in the note itself—and very much—yes. Greet both the G[amba]s—I value their good graces. That blessed villa is being got ready—as quickly as possible on account of the two little girls—Allegra—and *you*.

August 8th, 1820

My Love + + + Your note has not come until now, too late to permit me to go out to the country today————I have already given orders to Lega to retain this blessed Villa—but until I have settled my household there—it is not my intention to go to Filetto—as I do not wish, in these circumstances, to give an advantage to the Cavaliere, who would at once run to the Cardinal with a thousand lies and some *truths*

He has set spies upon me—and yesterday I nearly came to blows with a man in the pine-forest—who had begun to follow me everywhere—stopping when I stopped—and always standing nearby—until I lost patience and made him understand that if he did not go on his way—it would be the worse for him—at that he disappeared.

As to the rest, my love I wrote to you yesterday, the letter must be already at Papa's Greet the first-born of the Gambas for me - the Quiroga[23] of Ravenna—and believe me always your most faithful.

P.S. Allegrina is better.

Byron was right in fearing Count Guiccioli's manœuvres. All through the summer he kept spies assiduously watching the lovers, so as to collect fresh evidence, which might make it possible for him to cease paying his wife's alimony. It is clear from these letters that Byron's first visit to Filetto, in spite of Teresa's pleadings, continued to be postponed, owing to Count Gamba's wishes and to the danger of gossip in Ravenna. But Guiccioli's spies reported at least four secret

meetings. The first they declared to have taken place in Ravenna, after dark, on August 14th, when two women, both dressed as servants, were seen passing by the door to the stairs which led up to Lord Byron's apartment in Palazzo Guiccioli. One of these women, according to the witnesses (who were standing on the other side of the street) was the Countess Teresa, and the two Gamba brothers were standing on each side of the porch, as the women entered (This it is quite impossible to believe)

On the second occasion, August 16th, Lord Byron was said to have driven first to the Villa Bacinetti, which he had taken for the summer for Allegra, and then to have gone on to the Villa Gamba, where he spent the night This visit, according to the witnesses, he repeated 'on several occasions'

Finally at two o'clock in the morning of October 1st, a servant of Count Guiccioli's heard a great ringing of bells in Byron's room in Ravenna He got up, hid behind one of the pillars of the hall, and saw Byron's ex-servant Luigi (who was now in Teresa's service) let Teresa in, dressed in black He also saw her leave again, in the same manner, later on [24]

How much credence may be attached to the stories of Teresa's visits to Palazzo Guiccioli, it is difficult to say. The visits to Filetto certainly did take place, but openly, after August 16th and always, Teresa affirms, when her father and brothers were also at home

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

Ravenna *August 12th*, 1820

My love + + + Sunday can't be managed--the child is going to the country that day and there are a thousand things to be done and undone, you know the members of my household Pray have a little patience—in two or three days we shall see each other again.

Before receiving the formal notice of the Peers' intentions about the *Gazette's* announcement[25]—I don't know what answer to give—when I get it I will find an excuse in the child's illness and the distance. I don't know if this call includes people who are out of the country—or only the

Lords still in England. It seems to me a fairly despotic act—and if I really am included in the number, it will not be without the strongest of protests.—I kiss you 100000 times and shall be + + + + +

At last, after so many delays and postponements, Teresa and Byron saw each other again. On August 16th, Byron—in his great travelling-coach, and attended by two postillions—set forth on the fifteen-mile drive to Filetto. He had originally meant to return to Ravenna on the same day, but a 'magnificent thunderstorm, and lightning and hail' came to the lovers' aid, rendering his departure impossible. He accordingly stayed the night, and on the following morning, 'his friend was able to take him to visit her Father's rich and beautiful lands'. Byron, she says, was struck by the air of cleanliness and prosperity of the farms, 'comparing them most favourably with cottages in Ireland and even in some parts of England'.[26]

Byron's visits to Filetto now became fairly frequent. Allegra was settled at the Villa Bacinetti, and he would go and see her there and then drive on to Filetto, where he rode and hunted with Teresa's father and brother, took part in an occasional conspiratorial meeting or sat on the banks of the river with Teresa, reading aloud and talking in a pleasant, desultory fashion The more he saw of the Gamba family, the more he became attached to them. They were all so easy-going and warm-hearted, and they were so glad to see him, and they admired him so much! Besides, Byron had always felt the charm of family life—except when it was his own—and he took an especial pride in the fact that he knew Italian life from *within*, not as a mere traveller 'I have lived in the heart of their houses, in parts of Italy freshest and least influenced by strangers—have seen and become (*pars magna fui*) a portion of their hopes, and fears and passions.'[27]

Byron's next letter, addressed to Conte Guiccioli five weeks after he had taken his wife away from him, is odd in at least

two respects. The first, considering that the letter about which it complains is Guiccioli's account to Pietro Gamba of his matrimonial grievances, is that it should have been written at all The second is that it is written in much better, and more formal, Italian than any of Byron's other letters.

He seems to have been in a particularly touchy mood about his age, for in the same week he was writing in a similar vein to Moore, who had congratulated him on reaching what Dante calls the *mezzo del cammin di nostra vita,* the age of thirty-three. 'D——n your *mezzo cammin*—you should say "the prime of life"—a much more consolatory phrase. Besides, it is not correct. I was born in 1788, and consequently am but thirty-two '[28]

BYRON TO CONTE ALESSANDRO GUICCIOLI[29]

Ravenna *August 21st,* 1820

Sir · I have been informed that in a letter written by you to Rome, dated June 24th, you stated me to have been a man of 35 in 1819, which would now make me 36. This surprises me greatly, since I cannot conceive how, in consulting the *Biography of Living Men* for other information regarding my person, for your own purposes, you should have overlooked only the passage which refers to my birth as having taken place in the year 1788, which makes me at most *thirty-two.*

I thank you for the 'lustrum' with which you have generously presented me, but not finding myself disposed to accept it, I cannot but tell you so; and I am sure that a man to whom correctness in everything is important, as it is to you, will receive my information in good part, so as to rectify an error which may some day be observed in your archives. If I, in drawing up a memorandum of *your history,* were to make you out a man of *seventy,* adding one seventh to your age, you would not assuredly be pleased, and I will certainly not bear this injustice—not a small one, since it affects the truth. You well know that it is as much in human nature to ask for

additional years from *God*, as it is to refuse them from *Men*.

I have the honour to be Your most humble and devoted servant

BYRON

There is no record of Count Guiccioli's feelings on receiving this epistle, nor of any reply.

Byron's next letter to Teresa is wholly occupied with a new source of irritation: an impending visit from Fanny Silvestrini. This was a prospect which he was really unable to face with equanimity—as his remarks to Teresa show.

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

Ravenna *August 24th*, 1820

My Love + + + Swoon, indeed! Fanny in theory is bad enough—Fanny in person would be Death—not to say Hell, in this weather.

Imagine Signora Silvestrini and the heat together! No—no—no. Write, send- -stop her—deliver me—otherwise I don't know what will become of me--I said it—I foresaw it—she is coming. If she really comes—I shall turn monk at once, and the Church will gain . . . what she has lost in losing Lega, the . . .

I shall be with you on Monday,—Meanwhile I send you a little book, *Adolphe*—written by an old friend of de Staël—about whom I heard de Staël say horrible things at Coppet in 1816, with regard to his feelings and his behaviour to her.—But the book is well-written and only too true. Love me--remember me and above all—deliver me from Fanny or I shall swoon! + + + + + + +

The gift of *Adolphe*--that 'well-written book, only too true'--which accompanied the preceding letter, is a singularly striking instance of Byron's ferocious egotism.* 'The

* This trait was one which particularly distressed Lady Blessington, who said that from 'a too intense attention' to his own feelings, Byron was capable of 'grievously wounding' his friends, 'perfectly unconsciously; and of course, of even afterwards neglecting to pour oil and wine into the wound, not through ill nature, but from

truest picture of the misery unhallowed liaisons produce', he told Lady Blessington later on, 'is in the *Adolphe* of Benjamin Constant. I told Madame de Staël that there was more morale in that book than in all she ever wrote, and that it ought always to be given to every young woman who had read *Corinne,* as an antidote!'[80] It did not, however, occur to him that this summer—a time when Teresa was lonely, uncertain of her future, and possessed of unlimited leisure for unhappy broodings—was perhaps not the best moment to administer such an antidote, and it is probable that the intense distress which it awakened in her seemed to him both incomprehensible and exasperating.

Her letter—although clothed in the rhetorical diction of S. Chiara—reveals a most justifiable sadness, and a perfectly clear realization both of the character of her lover, and of her own situation.

CONTESSA GUICCIOLI TO BYRON

From the Villa of Filetto *August 26th,* 1820

My only Love--for Ever!!!

Adolphe! Byron—how much this book has hurt me! You cannot imagine! From the beginning, alas, I foresaw the end—but I read it with the greatest speed—thinking I might thus, at least in part, avoid the too violent impression it made on me. But his words, his expressions, are written in fire. The rapidity with which he glides over things does not defend them from his darts. So my mind, my heart, are deeply wounded. Byron—why did you send me this book? This was not the moment--*-indeed perhaps the moment will never come again for me!*—To be able to endure and enjoy that story one must be more remote from the condition of Eleonore *than I am*—and to give it to one's mistress to read, one must be *either very near to* the state of Adolphe, or very far away from it! Either you, my Byron, did not know this

sheer ignorance of its existence'. LADY BLESSINGTON, *The Idler in Italy,* I, p. 328.

book (terrifying mirror of the truth) or you are not yet acquainted with your friend's heart—or you are aware in yourself of a greater or lesser strength than I think you have. How much harm, I repeat, reading this book has done to me! How much! For pity's sake, Byron, if you have other books like it, don't send them to me! This ingenious analysis of the human heart (so miserable) is a medicine fit to prevent trouble, not to cure it, when it is already far advanced. And my suffering may become more bitter—it will never be healed.

On Monday I shall see you. This hope, and every other that concerns you, makes me feel still capable of pleasure . . . Otherwise I should have lost all thought of it, for the memory of having once enjoyed it could now be nothing but a torment. I will give back your book to you—if only I could also get rid of the recollection of it!

Farewell, my Byron! I have already copied the letter from Alessandro to Pierino—of which I learned today that *he has made a circular—and has sent it to all my and his relatives—and to all the principal families of Ravenna.* Who knows whether he will not succeed in getting everyone on his side?*

Farewell, my Byron. Your true friend and lover for Ever

TERESA GUICCIOLI G.

P.S. The Priests of the Suffragio have written, thanking me for my part in the subscription that you have sent me.

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

Ravenna *August 26th,* 1820

My Love + + + The circumstances of Adolphe are very different. Ellenore was not married, she was many years older than Adolphe—she was not amiable—etc., etc.—Don't think any more about things so dissimilar in every way.—

As to Alessandro's letter you must begin an answer in my name, which I shall sign—telling the truth about his conduct to me—with the various *tricks* used by him in his own interest. Do not forget also the *age,* because it shows, from the begin-

* This was a copy of Guiccioli's letter of June 24th to Pietro Gamba, telling his side of the story.

ning, a deliberate determination to conceal the truth. Papa has all the documents necessary for the statement which he has already made to the Cardinal. From the first moment that I knew A[lessandro], he began to make strange proposals to me—wanting me to marry Attilia*—and to buy the *Casa Raisi*[81] here in Ravenna. As to the Bologna affair and the rest, you already know about it.†— See to this.—On Monday we shall see each other again.

Love me—my only love + + + and believe me always your +

Ravenna *August 27th*, 1820

My Love + + + Papa will write you the chief reasons why I am not coming today as we had arranged, and Lega will tell you another reason. Pray do not add to these troubles your reproaches—because it is not my fault—I have given way only to Papa's arguments—who begged me strongly not to come now—until the Cardinal has calmed down.—

I have no news of you today—So I shall not say any more, except that I am and always shall be your most + + +

Allegra was now convalescing from her fever at the Villa Bacinetti, which was not far from Filetto—and Teresa sometimes went over there to see the child, although she emphasizes in the 'Vie', that she never met Byron there. On one of these occasions she sent Byron a lively account of Allegra's high spirits, 'describing the intelligence and grace with which she sang popular songs and mimicked the absurdities of an old servant', and eliciting a disapproving and very paternal comment.

Ravenna *August 30th*, 1820

My Love + + + I hope to be with you on the day after tomorrow. You have done very well to scold Papa—instead

* Guiccioli's daughter, who afterwards married Count Antonio Carranti of Imola, and who was then twelve years old.

† The 'Bologna affair' was the loan which Guiccioli asked of Byron

of me—firstly because it was not my fault—and then—because a long letter would have made me *swoon*. What you say about the child comforts me very much—except for that tendency to mockery, which may become a habit very agreeable for others, but which sooner or later brings trouble to those who practise it.

I will wait to tell you by word of mouth what I think of R.—for many reasons. Be careful what you write on this subject. I will tell you why.

My respects to Papa—love me always as your most sincere and very friendly + + +

P.S. I am sending you a French book in which you will find a lot about Rousseau and his relations with Mme Epinay. That man was mad—and not well treated by his friends

Let us hope we may see each other again the day after tomorrow—there is a big o———————————— + I feel it——— + ———

The absurd and charming scene described in Teresa's next letter appears to have taken place immediately after a visit of Byron's to Filetto. The occasion, according to Teresa, was an eclipse of the sun, for which she had given an *al fresco* party. 'Byron arrived at the moment when the Countess and the whole company, armed with optical instruments and smoked glasses, were observing the heavenly bodies, whose meeting was already beginning to cast a shadow over the earth. Lord Byron seated himself in their midst, not wishing to disturb with his arrival the solemn silence in which they were contemplating the movements of the Heavens'

While Byron looked through the telescope, Teresa contemplated him, allowing her imagination full rein: 'Perhaps he was not only seeing the strange phenomenon that was being accomplished in our terrestrial orbit, but was following with the eyes of his soul the incomprehensible and indescribable beauties of the Infinite Universe! . . But Man is so near to earth that as soon as his thoughts have risen to great heights, they descend again—and as soon as the sun's globe again began to shine, speech returned to the company, and

Lord Byron, too, joined them in a pleasant game of Bowls."[82]

From the bowling-green the company passed to a trial of marksmanship—a sport, Teresa added, in which Byron excelled, but in which he refused to take part whenever the target was a living bird ('a weakness, but the weakness of a great heart!')—and finally to the banks of the river. Here, in consequence of the eclipse, the water had risen to an unprecedented height, bringing with it a greater quantity of fish than had ever before been seen in that stream. The guests accordingly were hurriedly provided with fishing-nets—but before then, Byron had had enough of it, and had gone back to Ravenna.

CONTESSA GUICCIOLI TO BYRON

Filetto *September 7th*, 1820

My only Love—for Ever!!!! What a fine amusement fishing is my Love! I am fascinated by it—and envy a fisherman's life—without thinking whether my envy is reasonable or not.—Today I feel like this—Yes, my Love, I should like to be a fisherwoman!—Always, however, on condition that you would be a fisherman—or at least that you would not disdain to love and live with your fisherwoman.

I must have cried out a hundred times on the river bank: Oh, if only Byron (or rather I said my naughty Ducky O+) were here, how much more I should be enjoying myself—how much he would enjoy it, too! But my cry could not reach you—you had already gone half an hour before—and my pleasure could not become more perfect still—Ah! if you had been there! But I have not told you anything yet—I have just only noticed it—for the habit of understanding each other without explanation—that wisdom of the heart—takes away my common sense. Well then, my Love.

Half an hour after you left, the tide came up our river, bringing it to a height of a man and a half of water—and a prodigious quantity of fish. Which made us all want to go fishing.—So there were all my astronomers abandoning their smoked glasses and the marksmen their guns—and from the higher regions they descended to the watery ones. You can

imagine that our Savage [Pietro] gave himself up with ardour to the new exercise.—Yes, my Love—he stood for more than two hours in the water—trying by his skill to overcome the imperfections of his nets—and I stood meanwhile on the bank catching the fish that he threw to me—which in the end weighed over five pounds. Papa, the servants, and some peasants in other groups did the same. Oh, if you had been there, you would have enjoyed yourself!—

On Sunday I shall perhaps go to see Allegrina—and on Monday!!! I shall see my very naughty Ducky O +. On Saturday you will see Pierino—By whom I send you a written kiss—*as short as I can*—as this one is—isn't it, my Love? I kiss you with all my soul. Your true loving friend

TERESA

P.S. I have read further in the Epinay's Memoirs—that Lady has begun to disgust me, and Grimm a great deal, by their behaviour.

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

Ravenna *September 9th*, 1820

My Love + + + Fishing and the Fisherwoman! Always something new . . . Do you know that the Milanese *Gazette* says that I have *arrived* in London about the Queen's Business!! The veracity of Gazettes! The London papers report this—and my friends believe it, saying that for the present I want to be *incognito*.—One friend writes to me that many of them have been to see him—and went away again still not believing that I had not returned– among them the *Lamb*—without delay. She went away incredulous.—All this I found in yesterday's post.*

* The news of Byron's return to England had appeared in the *Whig Chronicle* of August 18th. 'We rejoice to learn that Lord Byron yesterday arrived in town from Italy.' Byron at once wrote to Murray: 'Pray do not let the papers paragraph me back to England; they may say what they please, any loathsome abuse but that.' And a few days later: 'My Sister tells me that you sent to her to enquire where I was, believing in my arrival, "*driving a curricle*", etc., into Palace Yard: do you think me a coxcomb

Nothing from the filthy parents-in-law[33]—Ferdinando is better. . . .

On Monday we shall see each other again . . . I am charged *with Sentiment*, but don't know how to express it—or spread it over four pages of words—but I swear that I love you in a way that all the letters of Cicero could not express—even if the *self-love* of that celebrated *Egoist* were converted into love of his neighbour—and expressed with all the eloquence of his profession. . . . Love me—my p.o.c.

P.S. —Fishing——what *Fish? B?*

Ravenna *September 14th*, 1820

My Love: I can't come before Monday—I have so many letters to write and a lot of other things—so on Monday we shall see each other. So you will have time to go to Russi[34] etc. which in any case I don't feel like doing . . . I would have written yesterday—but have not seen any of your relations. . . .

Ferdinando is still very ill*—Allegra came here yesterday, but still with some fever.—

I am writing in a hurry, and am always + + ; Love me + + + + + + +

Ferdinando must have died that night, for on the following day Teresa was writing to her husband a long letter of condolence—which the author of the Guiccioli Memoirs (who never misses an opportunity of being disagreeable about her) ascribes only to her fear of scandal and a wish to keep on speaking terms with her husband, in case he could still be of use to her But it is probable that Teresa, who, like Augusta

or a madman, to be capable of such an exhibition!" (*L.J.*, V, pp. 72 and 77.)

* Count Guiccioli's eldest son. This letter has a postscript in the hand of Lega Zambelli, who says: 'Ferdinando, if not dead, is drawing his last breath.' He adds, 'Poor boy, he has been sacrificed, owing to his family's lack of care.' Teresa only says that he died of sunstroke.

Leigh, could not really believe that there was any other sin than unkindness, was actuated in this case by much more instinctive motives.

Her whole relationship with her husband had always been odd—and it did not cease to be so, with their separation. Deeply as she had cause both to dislike and fear him—for his injuries to her, and no less for the injuries she had done to him—a curious bond of conjugal solidarity, having little to do with likes or dislikes, still tugged at her from time to time. Even now, she could not wholly keep out of his life; she must send him her condolences, and even her conjugal advice. For the real point of this curious letter appears to be in the last paragraph. It was at this moment that the revolutionary movement in the Romagna was flaring up again. Count Guiccioli, who had at times played the part of a Liberal, had, not unnaturally, withdrawn himself from any open support of the movement, since it was led by the Gamba family and Byron. But it is very probable that in the talk of the conspirators at Filetto, Teresa had heard some threat against him, or at least something that rendered his going to Milan undesirable; for the last sentences of her letter contain an unmistakable warning.

And may there not be another explanation too? Teresa could not resist a chance—any chance—of writing an eloquent letter!

CONTESSA GUICCIOLI TO CONTE ALESSANDRO GUICCIOLI

Villa di Filetto *September 15th*, 1820[85]

My Dear Alessandro: If you think that I am only moderately grieved by your loss, you are mistaken, as you are mistaken in thinking that there is any one in the world more anxious than I am, to see you tranquil. A messenger sent me by Lega has brought the sad news, and I cannot tell you how much I have felt it. I had no cause to love your son; perhaps, indeed, some to hate him. But I was neither strong nor weak enough to keep up both of these feelings towards him. So I merely regarded him as your comfort, and that was enough

to make his life dear to me, and now that he is dead, this makes me lament his death.

But as the fact is now irrevocable, I feel certain (and this is of some slight consolation) that since you will wish to draw upon your own inner resources to console yourself, you will the more readily be able in future to render great services to your Country, because being freed from more personal claims to turn your mental energies to more glorious thoughts, and assisted by your good fortune, you will come to fill that place in Society which you now do not fill, and of which you could render yourself most worthy!

I do not know whether you will be fully convinced of the sincerity of my feelings, for I do not feel certain, after what has passed between us, how fair your opinion of me may be But whatever it is, my conscience will be at ease, my witness and my recompense.

However, it is certain, I vow and I shall always do all I can to prove it, that I wish with all my heart to see you happy. In the past, when I could have some direct part in this, I tried to do so, but I did not succeed, because you did not understand me Owing to this lack of understanding, everything is now over between us, and in a way that is irreparable But indirectly, may I not still do you some good? *Now I hear you are thinking of going to Milan how much I should prefer you to give up this journey!* I will not enter into arguments that might hurt us both, and which might perhaps be unnecessary, for I think you have very well understood my intention. Farewell, my Alessandro, keep well Your most affectionate wife

TERESA GUICCIOLI *née* GAMBA

That Teresa should have written to her husband annoyed Byron so much—even though he presumably did not see the letter—that for a fortnight he neither wrote to her nor visited her But he seems to have sent her an angry message through Pierino, to which she replied with a letter of apology, and a placatory gift of roses.

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI*

Ravenna *September 28th,* 1820

My Love + Don G.† is impatient to return, so I have only a moment in which to answer you.—You cannot need my letters so long as you are (or were) in correspondence with your husband—nor can you be in any hurry for my presence—since you have been to Ravenna without telling me to come and see you.

Pierino may perhaps have exaggerated what I said in a moment of ill-humour about *the letter*—or at least I may have exaggerated my feelings, for the same reason. This season kills me with sadness every year. You know my last year's melancholy—and when I have that disease of the Spirit —it is better for others that I should keep away. However —it is only the weather that keeps me here—at the first opportunity we shall see each other again.

Believe me always your most

P.S. Thank you from my heart for the roses. Love me. My soul is like the leaves that fall in autumn—all yellow.‡—A *cantata*!

Ravenna *September 29th,* 1820

My Love + + + Your imagination carries you too far. Don Giovanni is a buffoon with his mysteries—Yesterday two filthy ladies were here, one uglier than the other—to try to enter my service.—I saw them in Lega's presence for just a minute —and then did not engage them— because they did not seem to me suitable for waiting on Allegrina.- -When I thought it necessary to change the Housekeeper, I sent Lega to the Vicari instead of going in person,—so as not to annoy you. What did you want me to do? I don't know any other Lady but your friend, whom I could trust for advice of this kind.

As soon as the roads are practicable, I will come to you—

* This letter is headed by Teresa 'Sur sa melancolie'.

† Don Giovanni was the family priest at Filetto.

‡ My days are in the yellow leaf;
The flowers and fruits of Love are gone.
On this day I complete my thirty-sixth year, verse 11.

then your suspicions will disappear. My letter will have explained to you why I did not write—I had no other reason.

As to my *sadness*—you know that it is in my character—particularly in certain seasons. It is truly a temperamental illness—which sometimes makes me fear the approach of madness—and for this reason, and at these times, I keep away from everyone—not wanting to make others unhappy.—Is this true or not? Is this the first time that you have seen me in this condition?

Love me and believe that we shall see each other soon again, and will love each other more than ever. +

Ravenna *October 1st*, 1820

My Love + + + I will answer your letter myself when I see you on Wednesday—I do not complain about circumstances or Fortune. My melancholy is something temperamental, inherited from my mother's family—particularly from my *grandfather*—and it is not constant—as you know—but—I don't want to bore you with these trifles. Pray forgive me if I do not write in greater detail—your messenger wants to leave, and I have two letters to write for England.

Love me and believe me + + +

Byron's melancholy—on this occasion as on many others—was three parts boredom, and was dispelled by a flare-up of political excitement. At the end of August the Austrians were on the Po, and the whole of the Romagna was in a ferment.

'We are going to fight a little, next month, if the Huns don't cross the Po, and probably if they do: I can't say more now . . . Depend upon it, there will be savage work, if once they begin here. The French courage proceeds from vanity, the German from phlegm, the Turkish from fanaticism and opium, the Spanish from pride, the English from coolness, the Dutch from obstinacy, the Russian from insensibility, but the *Italian* from *anger*; so you'll see that they will spare nothing![36]

The uprising to which Byron was referring had been planned at a meeting of the Carbonari in Cesena, at which

Vincenzo Gallina of Ravenna was the leading spirit. The rising was to take place on September 3rd or 4th, and Gallina, whose name is always accompanied by the adjectives 'restless', 'impatient', or 'fanatical' in contemporary narratives, expressed the conviction that by then every town in the Romagna would be ready to rise.

That all these plans, and Byron's participation in them, were no secret to the Government, is shown by a police report, on September 2nd: 'It is said that in Ravenna there are some ill-intentioned people who are assisted by the English Lord who has been settled for some time in Cavalier Guiccioli's house, and it is said that they have a secret agreement with the other cities of Romagna and with Bologna, that the Fair at Lugo will be the signal for a general revolution, and that it is their plan to attempt an uprising in Ravenna.'[87]

At the same time Cardinal Rusconi was writing to Cardinal Spina, the Legate at Bologna, a letter which plainly reveals his agitation and irresolution. The 'revolution', he wrote, had been planned for the beginning of September, because at that time the fourth instalment of the taxes would have been paid in, and the insurgents hoped to break into the Government banks at that favourable moment. He added that the chief centre of 'this wicked seditiousness' was Bologna, but that in Ravenna also 'many young men have been presented with little cards bearing the emblem of Liberty, which they keep hidden under their hats'. Yet it would not, he wrote, be prudent to arrest them, in case nothing compromising was found after all. Moreover, he pathetically added, he could only count upon 20 carabinieri (of whom three were ill) instead of 36, and on 150 troops, 'of whom some must be considered suspect. . . . It is also suspected,' he continued, 'that the famous Lord Byron, who for some time has been living in that city, is an accomplice of this dangerous plot. I give this information to His Eminence the Cardinal Secretary of State, but no measure has been taken with regard to him.'[88]

Shortly afterwards, however, the Cardinal's fears were relieved. Bologna, chiefly owing to the influence of Hercolani,

dropped out of the league, and Faenza began to waver. Further meetings of conspirators took place—one of them at Filetto—in which Pietro Gamba, speaking on behalf of Gallina, declared that it was now too late to retreat, even for their own sakes. The Government was now aware of their plans and of many of their names, and some of them would certainly be arrested. But the opinion of the company was against him, and although, in another heated meeting with representatives of the towns of Forlì, Cesena, Faenza and Ravenna, Gallina again urged violent action, declaring himself certain of his own Ravennati, all the more prudent conspirators (including Count Ruggero Gamba) were against him; the defection of Bologna was considered final, and the whole plan was given up for the time being.[39]

'My last letters', wrote Byron to Murray, 'will have taught you to expect an explosion here: it was primed and loaded, but they hesitated to fire the train. One of the Cities [Bologna] shirked from the league . . . Our *puir hill folk* [Byron is seeing himself as a Jacobite—but his Americani came from the flattest of plains] offered to strike and to raise the first banner. But Bologna paused—and now 't is Autumn, and the season half over. "Oh Jerusalem! Jerusalem!" The Huns are on the Po, but if once they pass it on their march to Naples, all Italy will rise behind them: the Dogs,—the Wolves—may they perish like the Host of Sennacherib!'[40]

Never was there a situation more confused, nor one in which concerted action seemed more difficult. 'One thing only was certain,' says Masi, 'the constant, pitiless tyranny, unheard-of persecution of all those who were thought to be Liberals, and bullying by the Sanfedisti, followed by bloody reprisals.'[41] All the leaders of the recent plots, including the Gambas, had good reason to be anxious—since none of them was certain how much the Government knew of their plans, or who might be arrested the next day.

'Here we all are', wrote Byron, 'in great confusion, some in arrest, some for flying to the hills, and for making a guerrilla fight for it, others for waiting for better times, and both sides watching each other like hunting leopards . . .

My *voice* was, like that of Sempronius, somewhat warlike, but the autumnal rains have damped a deal of military ardour.'[42]

BYRON TO CONTESSA DOMENICA GASPARA GUICCIOLI*

Ravenna *October 7th*, 1820

Dearest Gaspara + I shall think about the suggested week—and as you can imagine, very gladly.—Yesterday I received news from London—Which makes me prefer to stay here and limit my *patriotic services* to the Northern part of the 'bel paese'—rather than go and warm myself on Vesuvius—and then it is not necessary, since your flame-coloured hair is here and the head under it, hotter than lava. Besides, I feel a certain remorse at the idea of leaving you—(even if it were only for a few months) which gives me a poor notion of the pleasures of separation.

Papa is here with me—the Factor is leaving—so my dearest Gaspara + +

It is not known what news Byron had received from England about affairs in Naples—but it is certain that the situation there was not encouraging. On October 1st the first Neapolitan Parliament—consisting chiefly of priests, lawyers and small landowners, all members of the Carboneria—had been opened, with great public rejoicings and many eloquent speeches. Its meetings were held in a church, and were given up, not to the much-needed reform of the laws, but to the discussion, adorned by many classical quotations, of such matters as whether the name of Naples should be changed to that of Parthenope, and whether the inhabitants of the Provinces should resume their old classical titles of Lucans, Samnites, etc. The Parliament was the slave of the Carbonari, and

* Byron used this form of address as a joke—one of Teresa's names (according to the Romagna custom of giving the Christian name of one of the Magi to each of their children) being Gaspara. But it was not kind of him to add to the address 'née Feb. 18-1799'—a date which Teresa subsequently tried to alter to 1803.

there was no sign of the numerous reforms that had been promised. The more timid members of the aristocracy fled abroad or to their country estates; the people became increasingly discontented, and the king could think of no better way to re-establish law and order than to appeal for help to the rulers of Austria, Germany and Russia, who were meeting at Troppau—and who immediately decided to send an Austrian army to Naples.

The Neapolitan government, under the influence of General Pepe, who asserted his army of forty thousand men to be invincible—promptly declared war on Austria. And Byron no less promptly composed a letter to the Neapolitan people, in which, 'having understood that the Neapolitans permit even foreigners to contribute to the good cause', he not only offered the handsome sum of two thousand louis, from 'an Englishman, a friend to liberty', but also his own services. 'As a member of the English House of Peers, he would be a traitor to the principles which placed the reigning family of England on the throne, if he were not grateful for the noble lesson so lately given both to peoples and to kings.' The letter continued:

'His distance from the frontier, and the feeling of his personal incapacity to contribute efficaciously to the service of the nation, prevented him from proposing himself as worthy of the lowest commission, for which experience and talent might be requisite. But if, as a mere volunteer, his presence were not a burden to whomsoever he might serve under, he would repair to whatever place the Neapolitan Government might point out, there to obey the orders and participate in the dangers of his commanding officer, without any other motive than that of sharing the destiny of a brave nation defending itself against the self-called Holy Alliance, which but combines the vice of hypocrisy with despotism.'[48]

This 'noble letter' gave great pleasure to Teresa.

'What generosity,' she commented, 'what modesty, what greatness of soul! One can only feel compassion for anyone who could remain indifferent after reading it, for God would have deprived him both of intelligence and heart!'[44]

She adds, however, that the letter (of which a draft, in Byron's hand, remained with her) never reached its destination, for it was entrusted to a Neapolitan called Giuseppe Gigante, who declared himself an emissary of General Pepe's, but who had arrived in Ravenna, having been arrested by the Austrian police on the way, without any documents and 'almost naked'. Byron provided him with some clothes, and money and in spite of warnings that he might be a spy, gave him his letter for the Neapolitan government. As might have been expected, Gigante was again arrested on his way back, at Pesaro, and, Teresa affirms, swallowed some of the papers that had been entrusted to him—but whether or no these included Byron's letter, we do not know.

Throughout the autumn, expectations in Romagna rose high and Byron himself took the prospects of trouble so seriously that he wrote to Kinnaird to sell out some of his investments.

'My motives are the almost immediate explosion which must take place in Italy in the impending event of the passage of the Po by the barbarians, . . . and the further fall of the English funds in consequence; as your Tory scoundrels will, right or wrong, take part in any foreign war.'

And in a postscript he added: 'To give you a hint of the doings *here*. Since I began this letter, the news has arrived from Forlì (the next and nearest city) that last night the Liberals blew up, by means of a mine, the house of a *Brigand* (so they call here the Satellites of the tyrants) . . . People were arrested [words torn off] released them and shot a blackguard, or one of the Carabineers. They have also intimated gently to His Eminence of Forlì,* that if he continues to arm *assassins* (here they war in private in this way, there are bands in every town at so much a head, for those who

* The legate of Forlì, Cardinal Sanseverino, was especially hated for his conservatorism and for his crafty, obstinate opposition to any kind of reform. He did not hesitate, as Byron suggests, to provide arms for his satellites. Later on, in 1821, he was the first to issue the orders which sent many of the best citizens of the Romagna into exile.

like such expenses) they will throw him out of his palace windows, which are rather lofty. If these things don't prelude 'sword and gun fighting', you can judge for yourself.[45]

Whether or not Byron really believed in his own danger, it is difficult to say—but he certainly very much enjoyed hinting at it. 'There will be the devil to pay,' he told Moore, 'and there is no saying who will or will not be set down in his bill. If "honour should come unlooked for" to any of your acquaintance, make a Melody of it . . . In case you should not think him worth it, here is a Chant for you instead—

When a man hath no freedom to fight for at home,
Let him combat for that of his neighbours;
Let him think of the glories of Greece and of Rome
And get knock'd on the head for his labours.'[46]

To Teresa he hardly ever wrote about his conspiratorial activities, and his next letter refers merely to a practical joke played upon one of his servants, and to the French translation of his works which he was sending her. His comment on the translation to Murray was: 'The French translation of us . . . Oimé! Oimé!'[47]—and to Moore: 'Only think of being *traduced* into a foreign language in such an abominable travesty.'[48]

But he appears to have been completely unaware of the effect which his poems—and in particular his *Farewell* verses to his wife and his *Sketch from Private Life*, would be likely to have on Teresa. Her comments—which suggest that she had seen Byron, for the first time, in an unfavourable light—show considerable perceptiveness and moral courage—and a great distress. It is, indeed, a tribute to their relationship that she was able to speak so frankly. But it is not surprising that she was bewildered: the motives that prompted Byron's *Farewell* verses have puzzled many other people, both at the time and since. Tears, according to Byron's own account, fell all over the paper as he wrote—and Moore confirmed this: 'It is blotted all over with the marks of tears.' Both these verses and the *Sketch* (which was written twelve days later) were given to Murray for private distribution only; but someone was indiscreet, and shortly before he left England

they were published by *The Champion.* 'The turmoil they created was frantic . . . it was made into a party matter, while the Noel side, though scornfully silent, was outraged equally by "the degrading tribute to the world's opinion", in the *Farewell,* and the abuse, "blackguardly beyond belief" of Mrs. Clermont.'[49] But what Byron himself really thought about it all is not known. To his wife he wrote, on the same day that the *Farewell* was printed: 'More last words—not many—and such as you will attend to . . . I have just parted from Augusta—almost the last being you have left me to part with—and the only unshattered tie of my existence Wherever I may go—and I am going far--you and I can never meet again, in this world--or in the next. Let this content or atone.'[50]

BYRON TO CONTESSA DOMENICA GASPARA GUICCIOLI

It will have to be in a few days as I want to come on horse-back and the roads won't be practicable after all that rain.

Ravenna *October 11th,* 1820*

Dearest Gasparina + —It must have been a stroke of lightning 'to turn a lacquey to ashes' as Don Magnifico says[51] ———Nothing has happened—it was a joke of the servants against Luigi to frighten his Lady, the fair dame of your chamber.

Pray do not have such a massacre of geese—as I cannot come for several days. You will always be warned the day before—My love—don't be angry.

Send me the prints—as I want to have some frames made. I send you a very bad translation in French of the book you asked for some time ago.[52] You will find in it (full of foolishness and lies however) a very different account from that of my Pierinesque friends in Rome—about the cause of my *separation* from my wife. It is in the first volume———

* Either this letter or Teresa's answer, acknowledging the receipt of Byron's poems, is obviously misdated.

If you can favour me with the other volumes of the *biography of famous men,* I shall be grateful. Always + + +
P.S. The books have come. Thank you.

CONTESSA GUICCIOLI TO BYRON

Filetto *October 10th,* 1820

My only Love for ever!!! + + + I was infinitely glad to get your works—I have read one or two of them—*but how astounded I am!* One must know them to know you. The experience of a year and a half did not tell me as much about you as reading *two of your pages.* I must however confess to you that this increase of light on the subject is to your disadvantage; I do not mean as to your genius, for that must be adored in silence, but as to *morals,* of which it is permissible even for a simple mind like mine to speak, and must indeed be spoken of without reserve between Friends.

Here then, briefly, are my reflections.—I believed you to be sincere; now I shall not be able to affirm it with such assurance.—I believed you to be sensitive to misfortune, but *never* affected by it; this opinion I still have and must have, in order to esteem and love you; but you have written one thing that, in my opinion, might give the impression that in some moments of your life you showed a certain weakness of character. It is your *Farewell,* and the *Sketch from Private Life* that make me think so. In these there is more than talent, tenderness and Love; more than was proper towards a woman who had offended you; and besides it is completely in contradiction with all that you have told me about your feelings for your wife.—I do not blame you for having felt such a tenderness, it only hurts me that you should have concealed the truth from me; or if indeed you did not feel it, that you should so have deceived the World. Believe me, Byron, your *Farewell* in particular does not give any idea of your independent character. It gives the impression of a guilty man *asking for pity*; or at least, too proud to ask for it openly, but hoping that his prayer for it will be understood; and this is a situation which never should be yours! I assure you that I can hardly persuade myself that this *Farewell* is

Byron's. But if it is, and the sentiment expressed in it is sincere, I cannot understand how the proudest, the coldest, of Englishwomen could refrain from coming to throw herself into your arms and beg for mutual forgiveness.—Oh, I no longer understand anything—knowledge of the human heart is very difficult, and perhaps will always be unattainable by me. I will rest on this conviction; asking you meanwhile to forgive my frankness, which however I shall never give up as long as I shall be your friend—that is to say as long as I live. I will say no more to you about this subject.

Come whenever you like—I cannot and do not wish to force your inclinations.—I am sorry, because I had a great deal to say to you.

Your true Friend and Lover for Ever

TERESA G. G.

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

Ravenna *October 12th*, 1820[53]

My Love + Perhaps you are right—we will talk about it when we are together—for the present I will only tell you that in the year 1816, when these verses were printed, a French woman then in London, said, more or less in your words,—that 'she could not understand how the proudest woman', etc. etc., 'could restrain herself', etc. etc., and 'As for me', said she, 'whatever had been the guilt of my lover or husband, I could not have restrained myself a moment from flinging myself in his arms.' This opinion was printed in the daily gazettes—I did not know the person—beyond that it was a Frenchwoman.*—It is singular that a Frenchwoman and an Italian agree in this feeling.

The defence of the blessed *Mathematician*† was—'that I was not sincere—that all this was *Machiavellism* on my part—to make her seem in the wrong—because *in fact* I wished for a separation', etc. etc. You can judge for yourself—if I am so politic.

We shall see each other in a few days—Love me + my Gaspara + always

* The French lady was Madame de Staël. † Lady Byron.

Byron's next note refers to another letter from Fanny Silvestrini to Teresa—in which it would seem that the lady had been attempting a little blackmail. This is positively her last appearance.

Ravenna *October 25th*, 1820

My Love + Fanny's letter is a portrait of 'the procuress who wrote it'.* False, sly, arrogant, corrupt, pedantic, toadying and a liar. 'Frank to Ravenna'—frank to Hell—let the devil pay the journey! The only thing I should like for a moment would be to see her effect on Pierino—I am sure he would throw her out of the window the second day.

[torn] with her forced compliments about me the bitch—but I am [torn]

I have no time to say more for the courier is impatient. Greet Papa and Pierino and love me always + + + P.S. I don't know if Lega has an understanding with Signora F. but *I* have reached an understanding with *him* on the subject.

The reference to 'bigoted relatives' in the following letter is to some members of Teresa's family (probably her grandparents—since we know that her grandfather Count Paolo Gamba was a Sanfedista), who, 'since they considered that friendship with a heretic entailed eternal damnation', had written to her father the Ravenna gossip about Byron's visits. This letter Teresa had forwarded to Byron.

There was, however, more serious trouble than this in Ravenna. The oppression of the Clerical government had now become almost unendurable: it had imposed new and exorbitant taxes, of which the proceeds went to religious bodies; the tribunal showed gross favouritism and injustice; the law-courts were crowded, and the prisons overflowing.

'Here', wrote Byron, 'all is suspicion and terrorism, bullying, arming and disarming; the priests scared, the people

* Galeotto fu il libro e chi lo scrisse.' (DANTE, *inf.*, V, v. 137.) Some of this letter appears to have been expressed in such crude terms, that Teresa thought it best to tear off part of the page.

gloomy, and the merchants *buying* up corn to *supply the armies*. I am so pleased with the last piece of Italic patriotism, that I have underlined it for your remark; it is just as if our Hampshire farmers should prepare magazines for any two continental scoundrels who could land and fight it out in New Forest.'[54]

In such circumstances it is hardly surprising that the Papal government would have preferred Lord Byron to be elsewhere. But still no one liked to ask him to go. The local police received orders from the Vatican to arrest those of her servants who—in a city where no one was allowed to carry arms without a special permit—were walking about armed to the teeth, but even this mild step seemed to them too perilous. 'The operation is difficult,' they reported to Cardinal Consalvi, 'because they do not generally carry arms except when their master is with them.' And, since they were in the service of a foreigner, were they to be considered as foreigners themselves, or as Italians? It was all very difficult.—'Pray send some more precise instructions about Lord.' The Cardinal replied somewhat tartly that he did not see what difficulty there could be in finding out whether Byron's servants were foreigners or Italians, and in arresting those who were Italians, but, after several weeks of correspondence on the subject, the boldest step that the police felt able to take was 'confidentially to warn Lord Byron that it did not look well for his servants to accompany him fully armed'. And there the matter ended.[55]

'He gives orders right and left', says another police report, 'on the strength of the money that he freely distributes to the bad characters who form his society. He has never had any dealings with wise and honest people . . . He is the protector of the Cacciatori Americani and the first revolutionary in Ravenna.'[56]

His very generosity, which had never discriminated between one party and another in cases of need, and which had recently shown itself in a gift for the repairs of a church organ, was now considered suspect; he must be trying, the priests decided, to curry favour with the people. He had flown the tricolour

flag of the Carbonari from his balcony they said, and had himself stood at the door of the Palazzo Guiccioli, distributing money, 'in order to create a following'.[57]

Of all this Byron was not unaware, for in November he wrote to Kinnaird:

'They have taken it into their heads that I am popular . . . and are trying by all kinds of petty vexations to disgust and make me retire. This I should hardly believe, it seems so absurd, if some of their priests did not avow it. They try to fix squabbles upon my servants, to involve me in scrapes (no difficult matter), and lastly they (the governing party) menace to shut Madame Guiccioli up in a *Convent*. The last piece of policy springs from two motives; the one because her family are suspected of liberal principles, and the second because mine are known . . . She is, as women are apt to be by opposition, sufficiently heroic and obstinate . . . I have seen the correspondence of half a dozen bigots on the subject, and perceive that they have set about it, merely as an indirect way of attacking part of her relations, and myself.'[58]

It was to these attacks that he referred in his next letter to Teresa:

Ravenna *October 30th*, 1820

My Love—I can well believe anything of those bigoted relatives (of yours)—and of the Government, which now suspects everyone and would do anything—to send away or frighten those it fears—It will not, however, be directed only at *me*—but also at *your family*—(Pierino, for example) for being suspect in these recent patriotic matters.—But it is unjust to attack a woman for a man's misdoing———I had hoped, foreseeing all this, that my conduct after your separation from your husband had been sufficiently reserved (*in appearance*) to remove any pretext for taking fresh measures, particularly after the agreement between Guiccioli and your family—to give up a part of the allowance.

The bigots' envy naturally always makes them persecute others for the pleasures of which they have deprived themselves. For my part I don't see or understand anything—

except that—by any trivial means—they are attempting to rid themselves of my presence in the Papal States—and were it not for certain *hopes* and *sentiments* (including, *above all,* my love for you) I should very quickly *take myself off.*

Greet Papa and Pierino.

Elisei has come back and settled in Faenza—here is his letter to me. I don't know the circumstances well enough to give Papa advice. He should know about the character of his relations and of what the government is or is not capable. Of my love you have proofs and shall have more.
I am and shall be + + +

Ravenna *November 8th,* 1820

My Love—I did not write to you—because there was nothing new to say. 'Out of *Nothing* Nothing can arise', the Lady Mathematician said—which, however, is not true, for I have often seen a letter of six pages come out of *Nothing.* You know my great *talent* for *Silence*—and should forgive me when I do not write on every slightest occasion. The weather does not seem to be very favourable for your plan—but I will think about it.

Greet Papa and Pierino——and love me entirely +

P.S. *Write* if it suits you—otherwise I believe you could not live—so *write,* great Santa Chiara!

Ravenna *November 10th,* 1820

Thank you a thousand times for your present, my love—a fine *cantata* in your note.

With this weather it seems to me that your riding plans won't be very successful in the country round Filetto. I have not come to you, but I keep the hope of seeing you soon.

Greet Pierino and Papa—keep well and always love me.
I kiss you + + + +

P.S. They are speaking here of a revolution started in England but I do not believe it, for yesterday I had some recent letters and some Gazettes from Paris. These did not speak of any riot. The Queen's trial is going ahead with its usual indecency—it should have been decided by now.

November 18th, 1820

My Love + + Pray forgive me if I don't come to Filetto at this moment. All that we have to say—can well be said at Ravenna—so it isn't so very important.

Hoping to see you soon—I am always yours +

November 22nd, 1820

My Love + But what then can be done? Haven't you heard what Papa and Pierino say? who are your nearest relatives and I hope also *friends of mine* as I have behaved in good faith towards them. . . . These others, the *buffoons*—either in the government or (forgive me) in your family, want to sacrifice you; what is now needed is common sense and patience. If I did not love you—if I *wished to get rid of you without blame*—and also with the best excuse for myself—the most certain way would be to *visit you*—and to commit such imprudences in the face of the world and of the priests—who make up the *world here*.—I shall always be your

The preceding note—the last of this year—must have been written in answer to one of Teresa's impatient outbursts; she could not, would not, understand, that it was unwise for Byron to go to Filetto. Finally, at the end of the month, she could bear the separation no longer -and moved back to Ravenna herself, to 'a noble and comfortable apartment' in her father's palazzo.

6: FAREWELL TO RAVENNA

Women are much more *attached* than men
Byron to Lady Melbourne

The winter months of 1820-21 were spent by Teresa in her father's house in Ravenna—and by Byron in the Palazzo Guiccioli, visiting her every day. It was a very different winter from the previous one. Then the love-affair was in its most stormy phase: although living in the same house, their meetings had been uncertain and perilous, their love-making frustrated by quarrels and mutual reproaches, and their future was still completely uncertain. In public they had maintained the semi-formal relationship of a lady and her 'Cavalier Servente', driving together in Teresa's coach-and-six, and attending the theatre and carnival balls.

This winter they were never to be seen at the Ravenna parties, and had settled down to a semi-conjugal domestic routine, unbroken by emotional storms. In all this period, indeed, from November 1820 to July 1821, we have only one letter from Byron to Teresa—the one of January 18th about 'Marino Faliero'. It is possible, of course, that some others may have been lost; but it seems more probable that, seeing his *dama* in ease and privacy every day,—for although living under her father's roof, she had her own private apartment—Byron felt no need to exchange frequent love-letters. Teresa writes of this period as having been a singularly happy one—and she kept to the day of her death, among her 'Byron relics', a small piece of the wall-hangings of the room where Byron spent his evenings with her.[1]

'He now saw his friends,' she says, 'released at last from a dangerous and unbearable position and living under her father's protection, in a dwelling even more noble and comfortable than the one she had left in Palazzo Guiccioli; he

saw her happy and cherished by her whole family; and his happiness was increased by finding himself also the object of the regard and liking of the whole town.'

Even Teresa's paternal grandparents—'so highly esteemed and respected for their domestic and religious virtues'—overcame their prejudices, and 'could not object to a liaison which confined itself to the outward tokens of the purest friendship'.[2]

Their indulgence, says Teresa, was partly to be attributed to the indignation which Guiccioli's conduct had awakened in them, and partly to the fact that Byron—although an Englishman and a Protestant—had shown himself favourable to Catholicism to the extent of sending his child, then just four years old, to the convent-school of Bagnacavallo, where the old Count and Countess went to visit her. So poor little Allegra, too, played her part in the story.

Teresa says that his chief reason for reaching this decision was not only that the child was becoming increasingly wilful and uncontrollable, but that he suspected one of the maids of teaching her to tell lies.[3] She appears to have gone off to the school happily enough, for on the day of her arrival the brother of one of the Nuns was writing to Byron.

'I think it my duty to send you a report at once about your child Allegrina—a well-chosen name which suits her happy nature. As soon as she arrived she went off to play with several other little girls. Last night she slept quietly, and this morning I have found her more cheerful and lively than ever. She has already chosen her favourite playmate, among the many who are here, and with her she is enjoying herself —always, however, under the eyes of the Mother Superior and of my Sister.'[4]

Teresa has supplied every detail about the strict routine of Byron's life at this time, 'as the best reply to his enemies, who described his life in Italy as one of pleasure and vice'.[5] Since he worked all night at his studies, he seldom went to bed before dawn, and consequently got up very late—breakfasting on a cup of sugarless tea and the yolk of a raw egg, without bread. He then read or wrote letters until his after-

noon ride, which took place regularly two hours before sunset, and almost invariably in the company of Pietro Gamba. The two young men rode in the Pineta and indulged in pistol-practice—frequently followed by a handful of ragamuffins and beggars, who picked up the silver coins the gentlemen threw up into the air to shoot at. At sundown Byron went home again and dined frugally—'like a Pythagorean philisopher'—while reading, or talking to his dogs; he rested for half an hour, and then went to spend the rest of the evening until 11 o'clock in Teresa's drawing-room, in conversation, with a little music on the pianoforte or the harp. With regard to music, Teresa says that Byron was not hard to please. 'He liked what pleased him, because it had pleased him before'[6]—a sign of the completely unmusical, but which Teresa preferred to attribute to the innate constancy of his character. Over and over again he would ask her to play to him the same 'simple popular airs'—which often moved him to tears; but if she attempted 'some variations of the Italian school', he instantly asked her to return to the original melody.

As to conversation, it ranged over a fairly wide field. 'Talked of Italy,' says Byron, 'patriotism, Alfieri, Madame Albany and other branches of learning. Also Sallust's *Conspiracy of Catiline* and the *War of Jugurtha*',[7] until at nine Teresa's father and brother joined them and the conversation turned to farming, fencing and politics. Teresa, though a silly woman, was far from being a stupid one—and there is no doubt that Byron enjoyed talking to her. She almost precisely, indeed, fulfilled his description to Lady Blessington of his *beau idéal*: 'A woman with talent enough to be able to understand and value mine, but not sufficient to be able to shine herself. All men with pretensions,' he added, 'desire this, though few, if any, have the courage to avow it.'[8]

Teresa corrected his proofs,[9] she answered his Italian letters, she even proffered her opinion. 'What do you think a very pretty Italian lady said to me the other day? I said that I suspected it [*Don Juan*] would live longer than *Childe Harold*. "Ah, but (said she) I would rather have the fame of Childe Harold for three years than an *immortality* of Don

Juan!" The truth is that it is *too true*, and the women hate every thing which strips off the tinsel of *Sentiment*; and they are right, as it would rob them of their weapons.'[10]

Nor did Teresa content herself with this admission; she extracted a promise—which was kept—that Byron would stop writing *Don Juan* until she herself authorized him to continue it. Her own explanation of her behaviour is that, although she had only read the first two cantos of *Don Juan* (in a French translation) she had been deeply distressed by an article in the Milan *Gazette*, quoting the attacks on Byron's morals in the English papers.

'In vain did Lord Byron attempt to calm her by telling her that for his English enemies to be shocked by a burlesque satire was a piece of pure affectation and cant—that the greater part of the Classical literature which was put in the hands of youth was far more licentious—that poetry is never dangerous to morals, because it is not based on argument or reason, and has not the false optimism of a Rousseau's Saint Preux or a de Staël's Corinne . . . which do far more damage to women's hearts than all the poems of the present or the past. In vain did he tell her that the last three cantos, written under a *gentler* influence, were irreproachable.'[11]

Teresa would have none of it. 'She only knew that *he* was being attacked, tormented, calumniated'—and she begged him to stop writing a poem which could not fail to bring further attacks upon him. For a long time, she tells us, Byron merely laughed at her, but at last he gave way. 'Very well, I promise you not to write any more of *Don Juan* until you yourself authorize it.'[12] He then wrote to tell Murray of his decision: 'You will therefore look upon these three cantos as the last of the poem'[13] and enclosed Teresa's note of thanks.

'Do not forget, my Byron, the promise you have made me. Never shall I be able to express to you the satisfaction I feel, so great is the sentiment of joy and trust with which this sacrifice you have made has inspired me.' A postscript adds: 'I am only sorry that Don Juan was not left in the infernal regions.'[14]

Hobhouse's comments on Byron's decision, of which he wholeheartedly approved, are amusing: 'Take Doctor's advice: let your readers get up from you with an appetite. This is right with the best works, and of course more right when there is any doubt as to the nature of the performance. La Signora, to be sure, knows her sex and resembles her sex. The comedy of love is not to their or her taste; how should it be?———Your Don is too much of a joker to be a real favourite, although the ladies like to be thought able to appreciate his merits, as they do those of substantial vice, for fear of being taken for cold and passionless.'*

A few months later, when Byron was writing *Sardanapalus*, Teresa offered her advice about this work also, deploring the absence of any 'love-interest' in its first draft. She told him 'that in all civilizations alike, men cannot suppress their feelings'; she insisted that 'even without attributing to the Assyrians the hearts of knights errant, his genius would succeed in depicting a noble passion'; she added that a tragedy without love in it could not fail to be tedious.

'Lord Byron, who had begun to laugh as he listened to this tirade, became serious and said: "Perhaps you are right. The eloquence of Santa Chiara will reform me. I will think it over."'[15]

That evening he wrote in his Journal: 'Having the advantage of her native language, and natural female eloquence, she overcame my fewer arguments. I believe she was right. I must put more love into *Sardanapalus* than I intended.'[16]

'The sublime love of Myrrha', proudly asserts Teresa, was conceived that evening.'

It was at this time, too, that Byron was telling Teresa of his annoyances about the London performances of *Marino Faliero*. This tragedy which, as has been seen, had been written under great stress,—('I have', he told Moore, 'too

* Unpublished letter belonging to Sir John Murray. August 12th, 1821. Augusta shared Teresa's feelings about *Don Juan*. 'This new Poem, if persisted in, will be the ruin of him, for what I can learn.' Letter to Mr. Hodgson, April 17th, 1819. *L.J.* IV, p. 276.

many passions of my own on hand to do justice to those of the dead'[17]) was a piece of work which Byron took extremely seriously. 'I have "put my Soul into this tragedy"', he told Murray,[18] and in some of the Doge's speeches there is more than a little self-identification. Perhaps precisely for this reason, he awaited the verdict on this work with unusual anxiety, and reported with satisfaction such varying comments as Foscolo's remark that 'the characters are right Venetian', and Gifford's 'English—*genuine*, sterling English'. But he had no illusions as to the tragedy's fitness for the stage —and was extremely annoyed to receive from Teresa a copy of the Milan *Gazzetta*, stating that it was about to be performed, without his consent, at Drury Lane.

'I have just read in an *Italian paper*', he wrote to Murray on January 20th, '"that Ld B has a tragedy coming out", etc. etc. . . . Now I do reiterate and desire that everything may be done to prevent it from coming out on *any theatre*—for *which* it never was designed and on which . . . it could never succeed.'[19]

In spite, however, of these protests, the play was performed on April 30th and again for five nights in May, coldly received and a loss to the 'speculating buffoons'. The following letter was written when he returned the Milan *Gazzetta* to Teresa.[20]

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

January 18*th*, 1821

My Love: Here is the truth of what I said to you a few days ago about how I am being misinterpreted in every way—without knowing *why* or *how*.

The tragedy they are talking about—is not (and never was) either written for or adapted to the theatre—but the form is not romantic—it is rather regular—certainly regular as to the unity of time—and failing but slightly in that of place. You well know whether I ever intended to have it acted—for it was written by your side—and in moments certainly more tragic for me as a *man* than as a writer—for *you*

were in distress and danger. In the meantime I hear from your Gazette that a 'Cabala' has been formed—a party—and a devil of a *row* and without my having taken the slightest part in it.—They say that *the author read it aloud*!!!—*here perhaps*—in *Ravenna*! and to whom? perhaps to Fletcher!!! that illustrious man of letters!

This is portentous fooling—I do not feel well—my head aches and my heart a little.—*

I kiss you a 1000 times. Always all yours

But Byron's mind soon turned to other matters than literary quarrels. During the winter and early spring of 1821 Casa Gamba was the centre of the political plots of the Romagna, and Byron was as deeply involved as the rest of the family in the ups and downs of the conspirators' hopes and fears. It is difficult to give an adequate picture of the atmosphere of Ravenna during this time of intense expectation. Here was a little country town, no larger than Guildford or Nottingham (as they were then), but wholly given up to political dissension and strife. Day after day, the narrow streets were the scene of meetings between men of opposing parties, sometimes under the cloak of temporary fraternization, sometimes in open conflict. One evening the Papal guards would be drinking in a tavern with a group of friends—guards and Carbonari together waking the echoes with their songs:

Uniti e concordi
Scacciam lo straniero,
Ognun sia guerriero,
Sia pronto a pugnar;
Dall 'Alpi scoscese
All 'Etna infocato
Siam tutti uno Stato
Un popolo sol.[21]

* This letter is quoted by Moore (omitting the last sentence) and is printed in the *Letters and Journals* (V, p. 294) without a date. Byron himself has made a mistake in the year, dating it January 18th, 1820 (before *Marino Faliero* was written) whereas it is clearly of January 1821, two days before his letter to John Murray on the same subject.

But the next night there would be a shot in the dark, a sudden cry—and one of the soldiers was murdered. Then would come reprisal: the sudden arrest or assassination of a Liberal, to pay for the previous night's treachery. Two strangers met in the street. 'Two or three?' one would ask the other, referring to the *two* colours of the Austrian flag or the *three* of the Carboneria, and would know by the answer whether he had met an enemy or a friend.*

On Sunday mornings the Cardinal's procession crossed the Cathedral Square—the old Cardinal, whom the people called *Coccardino*, glaring suspiciously about him—the long train of minor priests and guards following, the devout kneeling for his blessing. Frequently the sermon took the form of a violent diatribe against the new ideas; and during it some of the Liberals went out. But it was chiefly after nightfall that the little city came to life. Then, behind the façades of those gloomy palaces, there were whispering voices: voices of fear in the Cardinal's palace, planning measures of repression and self-defence; voices of conspirators in the houses of Liberal nobles, in the shops, in the taverns, forming childish, impracticable schemes, repeating wild rumours, dreaming yet wilder dreams of freedom and unity. Armed guards entered the houses of those the Government considered suspect, turning the whole place upside down, in their search for arms and compromising papers. If anything suspicious was found, immediate arrest followed; the victims were taken off to one of the state fortresses, where interminable interrogatories awaited them, often followed by exile or execution.

The post-bags were searched and their contents duly reported to Rome and Vienna by the Government spies.

'I wonder if they can read them', wrote Byron, 'when they have opened them! If so, they may see, in my most legible hand, that I think them damned scoundrels and barbarians, their emperor a fool, and themselves more fools than he; all which they may send to Vienna, for anything I care. They

* The three colours of the Carboneria (black, red and blue) had a symbolic meaning: the black (coal) stood for faith, the blue (smoke) for hope and the red (fire) for charity.

have got themselves masters of the Papal police and are bullying away; but some day or other they will pay for it all.'[22]

For already the Carbonari were beginning to risk occasional acts of reprisal. On the evening of December 8th, 1820, as Byron was putting on his greatcoat to go and call on Teresa, he heard a shot, and, running out into the street, found a dying man lying there, wounded in five places. It was an officer of the Cardinal's guard.

'There were about him Diego, his Adjutant, crying like a child; a priest howling; a Surgeon who dared not touch him; two or three confused and frightened soldiers . . . and the street dark as pitch, with the people flying in all directions.' Byron had the man carried into his house, 'but it was too late, he was gone . . . He only said "*O Dio!* and *Gesù!*" two or three times, and appeared to have suffered very little'.*

The officer who had been murdered was a Captain Luigi Dal Pinto, who for two years had been in command of the Papal troops at Ravenna—'a brave officer,' says Byron, 'but an unpopular man'. The police attempted to find the murderer, but failed to do so—whereupon the Cardinal issued a proclamation offering a reward of 1000 scudi to any informer who would reveal his identity or to any of his accomplices who would give himself up. The informers were promised secrecy, and the accomplices impunity.[23]

As the winter wore on, snow and mud blocked the roads entirely, and the town suffered the isolation—and, for Byron, the tedium—of a veritable siege. Even the post from England was delayed. 'The snow of last week melting to the scirocco of today, so that there were two damned things at once. Could not even get to ride on horseback in the forest. Stayed at home all the morning—looked at the fire—wondered when the post would come.'[24]

Now and again, in a spell of better weather, a messenger

* *L.J.*, V, p. 136. Lieutenant Elisei, with whom Byron used to ride in the Pineta, wrote from Forlì a day later, to say how much Byron's humane behaviour had been appreciated. 'Many people have asked me about it; I have told the story as it is and everyone said that it did you great honour.' December 30th, 1820. Unpublished letter belonging to Sir John Murray.

would arrive from Faenza or Forlì, bringing news of what was happening in the rest of the Romagna. On January 7th, at a Conversazione, Pietro Gamba took Byron aside and told him that the Patriots had received notice from Forlì that the Cardinal had given orders for several arrests. The Ravenna conspirators were consequently arming themselves, and were prepared—if any arrests were attempted—to start a fight. Byron promptly offered to take into his own house any who feared arrest, and to fight for them, if the house were attacked. He then went home and spent the rest of the night in some exhilaration, awaiting the turn of events.

'Expect to hear the drum and the musquetry momently (for they swear to resist, and are right)—but I hear nothing, as yet, save the plash of the rain and the gusts of the wind . . . Mended the fire—have got the arms—and a book or two, which I shall turn over. I know little of their numbers, but think the Carbonari strong enough to beat the troops, even here. With twenty men this house might be defended for twenty-four hours against any force to be brought against it.'[25]

The next morning, however, there was an anticlimax. Pietro Gamba called to tell him that none of last night's rumours were true. No arrests had yet taken place, but an attack by the Sanfedisti was still expected at Forlì. The Sanfedisti—the bitterest opponents of the Carbonari—were members of an association originally founded by law-abiding Jesuits, at the time of the suppression of the Company, to defend the Catholic faith, the institutions of the Church, and the temporal dominion of the Pope, but which had gradually come to include all that was most reactionary in the country: 'ribald clerics, overbearing nobles, trouble-makers, impostors, spies—all standing on guard, like the dragon of the Hesperides, before the altar and the throne'.[26] The solemn oath of fidelity taken by the members of this order was the following:

'In the presence of God the Omnipotent, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and of Mary the ever Immaculate Virgin, of the whole Celestial Court, and of thee, Honoured Father, I vow to have my hand cut and my throat slit, to perish of hunger

or die in cruel martyrdom, to suffer the cruel tortures of Hell, rather than betray or deceive one of the honoured fathers or brothers of this Catholic Apostolic Society, or fail in the duties I have taken on. I swear to sustain with the whole strength of my heart and arm the holy cause to which I have consecrated myself, and show myself unforgiving to any man belonging to the infamous rabble of the Liberals, without any distinction of kinship, rank, sex or age. I swear immortal hatred against all the enemies of our only true and holy Religion, Catholic and Roman.'[27]

Later on, in the risings of 1831 and 1848, the members of this organization rivalled the most extreme revolutionaries in their deeds of violence; and already they were beginning to be feared.

On this occasion Byron listened to Pietro Gamba's story, furnished him with some more arms for his men, and, after repeating that in case of trouble, the conspirators might assemble in his house, offered some very sensible advice. 'I advised them to attack in detail, and in different parties, in different *places* (though at the *same* time) so as to divide the attention of the troops, who, though few, yet, being disciplined, would beat any body of people (not trained) in a regular fight.'[28]

That evening the Gambas came back with more news, which had been given them by Count Alborghetti. This suave and agreeable nobleman, who, in early days, had taken great pleasure in introducing Byron to Ravenna society, had for some time been sending him such political news as, in his capacity of Secretary General of the Province, often reached him, before becoming known by the general public. Thus in November he had been the first to tell Byron of Queen Caroline's acquittal.

'You could not have sent me better news,' Byron replied,[29] 'better for England, for it will prevent a revolution—though it may *hasten* a *reform*—or better for Italy, for if (as is probable) the Ministry is changed—we shall have a pacific administration, who may perhaps interfere to prevent the "bel paese" from becoming the prey alike of factious citi-

zens or of foreign armies. The News are also personally agreeable to me—for I have obligations to the Queen for her kindness to me when she kept her residence at Kensington Palace. My friends in England have reproached me severely for not being present to do my duty on Her Majesty's trial, but it is a satisfaction for me to see by the result that my humble vote and voice were not necessary.

'I beg my respects and thanks to His Eminence for the communication, and I request your acceptance of my acknowledgments; you write English so well that I need hardly tell you that you were right in *both* your terms—for if London had not been "illuminated" it is probable that the people would have "fired" it and then it would have been "illuminated" with a vengeance.'

Ten days later, on December 3rd, Alborghetti was asking Byron for more details on the subject. 'Since our publick papers speak with darkness and ambiguity about the Queen's trial and her deliverance, be so kind as to tell me something more clear and precise on purpose. What signifies the adjournment of Parliament for six months? According to your Laws, is the bill to be put on the carpet another time? Is the triumph of the Queen entire or incomplete?'[30]

Byron sent an immediate reply: 'I answer you without hesitation—the Bill is *thrown out entirely* and *completely*: the expression of "read again this day six months" is little more than a form used on the rejection of all Parliamentary Bills whatsoever, and which cannot be dispensed with: it is like saying "the King *never dies*" which is another form of the B. Constitution. The great struggle now will be to throw out the *Ministers*—how this may end we cannot yet know—England at present will *not go to war*——France and Prussia are against it—and if the Ministers are beaten—there will perhaps be no foreign war at all; but this is problematical.—Whether the Ministers in their agony will try some censure or other in a *different shape* against the Queen—is not certain, but if they do they will be beaten probably.'[31]

On December 11th Alborghetti wrote again about a change

of Ministry in England—which, he hopefully considered, may change the State of Europe'. And now the news he transmitted began to be more closely related to Italian affairs. At the beginning of December he had told Byron that the Pope, the King of Piedmont and the Grand Duke of Tuscany had been invited to the Congress of Leybach, but that neither the Pope nor Cardinal Consalvi would attend.[32] And, a few days later, he added that the King of Naples had also been invited. 'If', he wrote, 'the [Neapolitan] Nation hinders the king from going, this will afford a proof of his want of liberty, and will be considered as a declaration of war.' The king, according to Alborghetti, had appealed to his Parliament for permission to go, promising 'upon *his Royal word* that at his return he would give a Liberal Constitution, the most apt to the wants of his subjects and entirely grounded on liberal principles'.[33]

At the meeting, indeed, of the Neapolitan Parliament on December 8th, to which Alborghetti referred, the most violent feeling had been shown against the king's going to Leybach. Many of the deputies, including General Pepe, had appeared with daggers in their hands, wearing the colours of the Carboneria, and crying 'The Spanish Constitution or Death!' The streets around the Parliament were filled with a threatening crowd. The Carbonari wished for open war with Austria, and referred to the Abruzzi, somewhat prematurely, as the Neapolitan Thermopylae, but the army itself and the people were all for peace and quiet.[34]

By the end of the month, however, Alborghetti was writing to Byron. 'There is, to my advice, no hope of accommodation between the sovereign and the people of Naples, because it seems decided not to bear the constitution of Spain in Italy. They write from Milan that the Austrian Army shall go to Naples in any case, either as a friend or an enemy.'[35]

Alborghetti's letters requested Byron to maintain the greatest secrecy about his information, and not to give away the name of his informant. Byron, however, did not take either the Count or his news very seriously.

'He is a *trimmer,*' he wrote in his Journal on January 8th, after noting Alborghetti's news from Forlì, 'and deals, at present, his cards with both hands. If he don't mind, they'll be full. He pretends (*I* doubt him—*they* don't—we shall see) that there is no such order (of arrest), and seems staggered by the immense exertions of the Neapolitans and the fierce spirit of the Liberals here. The truth is that [he] cares for little but his place (which is a good one) and wishes to play pretty with both parties. He has changed his mind thirty times these last three moons, to my knowledge, for he corresponds with me. But he is not a bloody fellow—only an avaricious one.'*

The police, too, kept an eye on Alborghetti. Later on, one of their spies in Ravenna was solemnly reproved by the head of the police for going to the Count's house, because 'he is considered double-faced and greedy'. The spy hastened to justify himself, saying that: 'In that company there is nothing secret, and the conversation is of a kind not to injure either the Government or private individuals. What Alborghetti's views on politics are I would not like to say, for in speaking to me he has certainly been fair and reasonable; as to his being greedy, one has unfortunately only got to have a post, to be subject to this accusation.'[86]

On this occasion Alborghetti's information to Byron appears to have been exact, and the conspirators realized that, after all, nothing was going to happen for the present. 'It seems that just at this moment (as Lydia Languish says) "there will be no elopement after all". I wish that I had known as much last night . . . And yet I ought not to complain, for, though it is a sirocco, and heavy rain, I have not *yawned* for these two days.'[87]

* *L.J.*, V, pp. 159-60. Alborghetti's name is replaced by an asterisk, but there can be no doubt about his identity Teresa gives a similar account of him in the 'Vie', calling him 'a witty and timid man, concerned only with his own interests, who—as he did not know yet who would win—kept a foot in both stirrups. He often went to see Lord Byron, and *pretended* to keep him informed about events. Lord Byron found his company amusing, but knew what to think of him, and was always very careful.' 'Vie', pp. 571-2.

The next morning, however, a fresh rumour came from Bologna: the Austrian troops had been placed on war pay and were about to march. The usual conspirators assembled in the evening. 'They mean to *insurrect* here, and are to honour me with a call thereupon. I shall not fall back, though I don't think them in force or heart sufficient to make much of it. But *onward*!—it is now the time to act, and what signifies *self*, if a single spark of that which would be unworthy of the past can be bequeathed unquenchedly to the future?'[38]

And, four days later: 'News come—the *Powers* mean to war with the peoples. The intelligence seems positive . . . The king-times are fast finishing. There will be blood shed like water, and tears like mist; but the peoples will conquer in the end. I shall not live to see it, but I foresee it.'[39]

But, again, the excitement subsided—and, again, kept indoors by the rain and mud, boredom and melancholy overcame him. January 22nd was his birthday.

'"'Tis the middle of the night by the castle-clock," and I am now thirty-three!

Through life's road, so dim and dirty,
I have dragged to three-and-thirty.
What have these years left to me?
Nothing—except thirty-three.'

'I go to my bed', he added, 'with a heaviness of heart at having lived so long, and to so little purpose.'[40]

The thaw was now approaching, and with it the date when, according to plan, the Neapolitan revolutionary troops were to march northward and, after joining the insurgents of the Romagna, to liberate the Papal States. But as the time for action drew nearer, Byron was appalled by the frivolity and irresponsibility of his fellow-conspirators. Carnival was now again in full swing—and the revolutionaries were engaged in displaying their masques on the Corse.

'*Vive la bagatelle!* The Germans are on the Po, the Barbarians at the gate, and their masters in council at Leybach . . . and lo! they dance and sing and make merry!'[41]

As for his own friends, they had all gone off on a shooting-

party: 'They don't return till Sunday—that is to say, they have been out for five days, buffooning, while the interests of a whole country are at stake, and even they themselves compromised. It is a difficult part to play amongst such a set of assassins and blockheads,—but, when the scum is skimmed off, or has boiled over, good may come of it. If this country could but be freed, what would be too great for the accomplishment of that desire? for the extinction of that Sigh of Ages? Let us hope They have hoped these thousand years.'[42] The best of the lot, he maintained, were the peasants—'a fine, savage race of two-legged leopards,'— and his spirits rose when, the weather having cleared, he was able to ride out into the forest, and there met a company of the *Americani* 'all armed and singing with all their might, "Sem tutti soldat' per la libertà" ("We are all soldiers for liberty") They cheered me as I passed.—I returned their salute, and rode on.'[43]

The date of the rising was fixed at last; it was to be on February 15th to coincide with the day when the Austrian passage of the Po was expected. But now, again, there was a pitiable piece of mismanagement. The Austrians, having perhaps had word of the plan, put forward the date of their advance, and before the cities of the Romagna had succeeded in uniting their scattered volunteers, 40,000 Austrian troops were across the Po. The Carboneria headquarters in Bologna ordered that they were 'to be allowed to pass, and only to be attacked on all sides on their return'.* And indeed, when they arrived, it was found that some of their officers were themselves Carbonari, so that they were most cordially received and 'even some of those citizens who had been most noted for their predilection for the new ideas, feasted with them'.[44] The Austrian army thus proceeded southwards without any interference and another opportunity was lost.

The Papal Government at once redoubled its severities.

* UCCELLINI, op. cit., p. 9. 'But who', he pathetically added, could do so, when at last they did come from their enterprise, triumphant and with branches of myrtle in their helmets?'

Private houses were searched, there were fresh arrests, and the Cardinal issued a Proclamation—of which a copy was sent beforehand to Byron by Alborghetti—declaring that anyone found in the possession of arms was liable to arrest. Pietro Gamba accordingly decided that the only safe place in Ravenna for the arms of his volunteers, most of which had been purchased with Byron's money, was Byron's cellar, and hastily dumped them there, when he was out, without even consulting him.

'They throw back upon my hands, and into my house, these very arms . . . with which I had furnished them at their own request, and at my own peril and expense . . .' But the next day he added: 'It is no great matter, supposing that Italy could be liberated, who or what is sacrificed. Only think—a free Italy!! Why, there has been nothing like it since the days of Augustus.'[45]

For a few days longer hope persisted—a faint hope, since it rested upon the Neapolitans. 'Let the Neapolitans have but the pluck of the Dutch of old, or the Spaniards of now, or of the German Protestants, the Scotch Presbyterians, the Swiss under Tell, or the Greeks under Themistocles . . . and there is yet a resurrection for Italy, and a hope for the world.'[46]

On February 24th the Pope issued a decree, warning all good Catholics to abstain from taking part in the forthcoming rising—and Alborghetti confidentially sent a copy of the document, before its publication, to Byron—'a sign', the latter commented, 'that he does not know what to think. When he wants to be well with the patriots, he sends me some civil message or other'. Byron's own optimism was still unshaken: 'For my own part, it seems to me, that nothing but the most decided success of the Barbarians can prevent a general and immediate rise of the whole nation!'[47]

And then the bad news came. 'The secret intelligence arrived this morning from the frontier to the C[arbonari] is as bad as possible. The *plan* has missed—the Chiefs are betrayed, military as well as civil—and the Neapolitans not only have *not* moved, but have declared to the P[apal] Govern-

ment and to the Barbarians, that they know nothing of the matter!!! Thus the world goes, and thus the Italians are always lost, for lack of union among themselves '[48]

The story of the defeat of the Neapolitan army is, indeed, —when we remember how it was formed and what Government it defended—hardly surprising. It was composed of 74,000 men—to confront the Austrian 43,000 But of the Neapolitans 42,000 were raw recruits, and the rest were the unamalgamated mob of disgruntled veterans and dilettante civilians which we have already described. Moreover, too many members of the Carboneria, who had been responsible beforehand for the most warlike speeches, now found excellent reasons for staying at home, while those who went with the army openly stated their lack of faith in its victory One person alone remained incorrigibly hopeful · General Pepe, who caused the Naples *Gazette* solemnly to announce the precise date—March 7th—on which his troops would be victorious!

On that day, indeed, his ill-armed, ill-led, undisciplined rabble found themselves face to face, in the plain of Rieti, with the Austrian army—and fled, almost before a shot was fired In Naples, the greater part of the deputies showed an equal haste to desert the Parliament and by March 23rd the Austrian troops had occupied Naples. The constitutional regime was over

Once again it is in Rangone that we find the most vivid account of what happened, in a lampoon of the day.

IL LAMENTO DI PULCINELLA

Pulcinella malcontento
Di servir nel reggimento
Scrive a Mamma a Benevento
Della patria il triste evento:
'Movimento, Parlamento,
Giuramento, sgiuramento
Gran fermento e poco argento
Armamento, e nel cimento

Siam fuggiti come il vento.
Me ne pento, me ne pento
Mamma cara, Mamma bella,
Prega Dio per Pulcinella.'[49]

It may well be imagined with what consternation the news was received in the Romagna. Not only had the Neapolitan forces been scattered, but their leaders had denied that any plan of union with the Romagna had ever existed.

'The real Italians', wrote Byron, 'are *not* to blame—merely the scoundrels at the *Heel of the Boot*———The Neapolitans have betrayed themselves and all the World, and those who would have given their blood for Italy can now only give her their tears.'[50]

Byron now advised his fellow-conspirators to rise at once, rather than wait to be arrested. He again offered 'whatever I can do by money, means or person', starting with the practical gift of 2500 scudi. But the Carbonari were now deeply disheartened, messages had to be sent to the other cities of the Romagna before any decision could be reached and it soon became evident that nothing would be done. Byron took his disappointment to Teresa, as she sat at her harpsichord: '"Alas," she said with the tears in her eyes, "the Italians must now return to making operas." "I fear", Byron commented, "*that* and maccaroni are their forte, and 'motley their only wear'. However, there are some high spirits among them still." '[51]

And it was precisely these few 'high spirits' who were now in danger. The Papal Government, thanks to its ubiquitous spies, was well informed by now of the names of its enemies.

'I have risked myself with the others *here*, and how far I may or may not be compromised is a problem at this moment; some of them, like "Craigengelt", would "tell all and more than all, to save themselves".'[52]

Others, at the same time, were retorting to the Government's policy of intimidation, with acts of violence. At

Faenza a Canon of the Cathedral, Monsignor Montevecchi, well known for his diatribes from the pulpit against the Carbonari, was shot at in the Corso, and a few weeks later was murdered.[53] At Forli and in Ravenna several other agents of the police were also assassinated.

'A German spy (*boasting* himself such) was stabbed last week, but *not* mortally. The moment I heard that he went about bullying and boasting, it was easy for me, or anyone else, to foretell what would occur to him'[54]

For a few weeks the Government remained inactive—completing its plans and its lists Then, quite suddenly, it acted. At Forli, many scores of arrests were made, a new batch of Liberals was exiled or imprisoned And now some fresh attempts were made to find a pretext for getting rid of Byron.

First Cardinal Rusconi decided to look into the case of Gigante, the man to whom Byron had entrusted his imprudent address to the Neapolitan insurgents On behalf of the Secretary of State, Cardinal Rusconi wrote to Byron, to inquire whether it was true.

(*a*) That Gigante had called upon Lega Zambelli and had presented to Byron a request for money, saying that he had been arrested and robbed,

(*b*) That his request had been granted, and

(*c*) That he had called upon Byron to express his gratitude[55]

Over Byron's letter a veil of silence was drawn.

Alborghetti forwarded the Cardinal's letter to Byron, with a memorandum for a suitable reply, trusting that 'the transaction will bring no harm to the poor devil who is the object of it'.[56] Byron at once replied:

BYRON TO CONTE GIUSEPPE ALBORGHETTI[57]

Ravenna *May 25th*, 1821

Dear Sir: I enclose you the copy for one or two slight alterations and also the *petition* of this Signor Giant. The Document itself confirms what I have said . . .

If you would have the goodness to have copied out on the enclosed sheet of paper the *answer* to the Cardinal, I will sign it with pleasure. Yours ever truly B.

Apparently, however, the Cardinal thought the matter too trivial a one to enable him to get rid of Byron, and only a few weeks later, another expedient was tried. An officer of the Cardinal's guard, in plain clothes, picked a quarrel with Tita, Byron's servant, who, having drawn his stiletto, was imprisoned and threatened with banishment. Byron at once sent off an indignant letter of protest to Alborghetti.

BYRON TO CONTE GIUSEPPE ALBORGHETTI[58]

June 28th, 1821

Dear Sir: It appears to me that there must be some *clerical* intrigue of the low priests about the Cardinal, to render all this nonsense necessary about a squabble in the street of *words only*, between a soldier and a servant. If it is directed against *me*, it shan't succeed—for I desire no better than a fair examination of my conduct, as far as connected with the place or the inhabitants.

If against *the poor Valet*, it is an odious oppression; I desire no more than a process, for then they would see the *falsehood* of all the *trash* about this man, who has *no more to do with political matters than the Man in the Moon.*

If you can get this business settled either *here* (which would be better and shorter) or at Rome, you will not find me less obliged or more ungrateful than you have hitherto found me. Why can't they decide the matter by an investigation, an arrest or a reproof? There never was any objection on my part to his having a punishment proportioned to the offence —but not a chastisement the consequences of which might affect the man's prospects through me. I wish to know what is to be gained by it? If they think to get *rid* of *me* they shan't—for as I am conscious of no fault, I will yield to no oppression, but will go at my own good time, when it suits my inclination and affairs.

That they may disgust me is not difficult—and in that case it may so happen that more than myself may be disgusted in the end. I wrote to the Cardinal in the only style that it became me to use. I am not conscious of being wanting in respect to his age and station—in other points I used the freedom of statement due to my own rank, and the circumstances of the business. Believe me, yours ever and truly

BYRON

Alborghetti seems at this time to have felt himself under some obligation to Byron, for on June 17th, he had written to him in terms of the most impassioned gratitude: 'What must I say of your kindness and generosity? Or how can I say enough? You are like the Lord, whose rewards are of a hundred for one. The duties of society and friendship prescribed the little service that I made you, and I am confounded in seeing at what a high rate you have put it. I then devote myself to your service for ever, and I sign this protestation with my name without hesitation. I never blushed to make the world acquainted, that I know gratefulness.'[59]

But in spite of all these highflown phrases, Alborghetti did not now compromise himself by calling on Byron, but merely sent him his lawyer: 'Forget for a moment the liberty and the greatness of your country, and pity the necessity which obliges us to every sort of circumspection . . . In the meantime I pray you to calm your heat, and be assured that the Government, *till now,* do not aim at all your respectable Person.'[60]

Alborghetti, moreover, did not attempt to plead with the Cardinal, but was only able to report that the prelate, 'after many praises of your love of justice and impartiality, insists upon the removal of the same servant, the more so as he has been represented to him as a very bad subject.'

But Alborghetti persevered, and at last wrote to Byron that 'the great business of your servant is over and in the best and in the most satisfactory manner: everyone has dealt with him as with a Knight.' The servant 'did not utter a single word of excuse'; the Cardinal yielded about the banishment and

let him out of prison; and Alborghetti could confirm that 'at four o'clock he will be ready to serve you as usual'.[61]

The general situation in Ravenna, however, had not improved. The arrests of prominent Liberals continued, and it now seemed inevitable that the Gambas should be included in their number. At last, after some weeks of painful suspense, the blow fell. On the evening of July 10th, as he was coming home from the theatre, Pietro Gamba was arrested and was escorted to the frontier of the State. The next morning his rooms were searched, but Teresa had been warned in time, and was able to destroy any compromising papers. It was believed that Count Ruggero Gamba would be spared—in view of his position as the head of a family, and also of the fact that, although he had made no secret of where his sympathies lay, he was not actually an active member of the Carboneria. But since the principal object of the measures against the Gamba family was to provoke the departure of Byron—whom no one dared to molest directly—Count Ruggero, too, was added to the list of exiles, and ordered to leave the State within twenty-four hours. Since Teresa was now living under her father's protection, it was presumed that she would go with him, and that Byron's departure would therefore also be ensured.

But at this point Teresa seems to have broken down completely. How, she asked, was it possible for her to leave Byron in Ravenna, where she knew his life was threatened 'by sectarian fanatics like the Sanfedisti and Austrian hirelings'? She wrote herself that her courage failed her, and that 'accablée', she let her father go off alone in the early morning to Filetto, where he was to put his affairs in order, before leaving the State on the next day. From here, still expecting Teresa to join him, he sent her the following letter:

CONTE RUGGERO GAMBA TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

July 11th, 1821

My Teresa: Your agitation is in my mind all the time and causes me ever greater pain. I had hoped to find comfort in

you, and to give some to you in return, but now your weakness frightens me. Take courage, for your own good and for ours, and try to calm your imagination, which can depict nothing but tragedies. As for me, I assure you that this free air makes my spirit feel free too—and that I felt *prouder,* once I stood outside those walls, which now enclose no one but slaves Try to strengthen your spirit with such thoughts and to be of some support to mine. Remember that Pietro is waiting for us—and not with eyes flooded with tears. Embrace your brothers for me, and most of all my little Faustina* —let your tenderness be the outward expression of mine. Tell Lord Byron that I hope to see him again soon. Tomorrow at about four o'clock I think we should do well to start. I will wait for you at the race-track Think of a happy future —conquer your imagination thus. If you have any important news to send me, give it to the coachman, who alone has my orders. Your affectionate father.

Teresa at once sent on this letter to Byron, together with a note, 'containing the expression of a sorrow which could only increase Byron's own'.

July 11th, 1821

My dear Byron · You will not refuse to become the keeper of my troubles—you who are their only cause—you who alone can understand me and give me peace—you who are the only tie that still holds me to life. I cannot describe my state to you—it is a continual agony. What a night! Every hour that passed seemed to me a century of suffering, and yet only a minute, when I thought that so few more were left, before I must leave you. My dear Byron, do you think that I shall be strong enough? I am feeling very unwell—I do not seem to be able to collect my ideas—as perhaps you will see from this letter—my head is all upset—am I losing my mind? Ah, it would be better! I should suffer no more. This is the first

* Faustina was Teresa's youngest sister, born in 1819. Her mother died at her birth.

moment I have felt alive since last night, because I am talking to you—but when I am certain that you do not hear me any more, when my laments will be lost in space, my God, my God—I feel as if I should not be able to go on living. My Byron, give me strength, make me able to fulfil my duties as a daughter.

Why do you want to take your little girl out of the convent? Would it not be better to leave her in the safe place where she is? This is just a thought that crosses my mind, which I did not express last night because my ideas were so confused, but I do believe that it would be the best thing for her

My dear Byron, forgive me if I trouble you with my letters—but it relieves me to write to you—and your generosity will bear with me [62]

'This anguish' Teresa herself comments, 'may seem exaggerated and puerile to anyone who has not known the state of the country at that time' Byron, she tells us, at once hurried to her side To a certain extent, he shared her anxiety He thought it improbable that the exiles would be allowed to remain in Tuscany, and he therefore wished Teresa's departure to be put off, until her father was more certain of his own future. He accordingly sent the following letter to Count Ruggero.

BYRON TO CONTE RUGGERO GAMBA

July 12th, 1821

My dear Ruggero: You are Teresa's master by right—and mine by duty and friendship. But in view of the circumstances I should think it better, also for prudence's sake, for her not to leave for a few days. If you insist, she will give way and so will I—who have not and should not have a voice in the matter. But the passports are equivocal—her presence will not be of any use to prevent them if they want to molest you, or to console you—for you would not want to see a woman left alone in such a situation.

If things go well we shall join you; if ill—even then we shall join you, in any circumstances whatever—and I shall

consider it my duty to find you, even if you are in prison.—

But I beg you not to precipitate matters for the present, and particularly to think of all that might happen to Teresa, deprived of you and of Pierino—and in enemy country,——

For my part I have no more to say except that I hope to see you and Pierino very soon —which I will do in one place or another —Keep well and believe me always, Your most affectionate friend BYRON

P.S. I am returning today's packet—which Teresa made you return to me. Make use freely not only of that, but of everything of mine.—

You will do as you wish —but in any case remember- that if any separation occurs between Teresa and me—it will not be my fault.

Count Gamba, on receiving this letter, at once sent his daughter his consent to her remaining in Ravenna. 'I breathe again,' Teresa wrote to Byron. 'My father is willing for me to remain—read the enclosed letter. Now I am only left with the pain of uncertainty about my father's and my brother's fate—Pierino's especially. But what a compensation to be able to stay here—where you are! This evening we shall see each other again'[63]

Letters came from the exiles, from Bologna and Florence, and for a few days it seemed possible that Count Ruggero might be allowed to return, as had happened in a few other cases For Pietro, no such permission was likely, and indeed he wrote that he would not accept it if it came. 'As for me, I neither ask nor wish to return,' he wrote to his sister. 'No power could make me come back to places which, in their present condition, I despise and hate.'[64]

Count Ruggero wrote in a calmer tone. 'Here in Florence,' he wrote, 'my spirit is at rest. Those who tried to triumph over us only deserve our contempt and will be sufficiently punished by the opinion of all good and sensible men—and time will avenge us.

'The Tuscan Government has welcomed us cordially, and had I no children or business to call me back, I would go so

far as to say that this is one of the best moments of my life. Meanwhile public opinion and bewilderment is so clearly on our side, that it somewhat recompenses us for the injustice we have endured. But I belong entirely to my family, and on their account, I should prefer my return to Ravenna to any other satisfaction on earth.'[65]

Moved by these letters, by Teresa's tears and by his own desire to remain in Ravenna, Byron was determined to leave nothing undone to obtain the exiles' return. Elizabeth Duchess of Devonshire,—an old friend of Lady Melbourne's and one of the most charming women of her time—was then living in Rome and enjoyed a considerable influence in Papal circles. Might she not be persuaded to use it on behalf of the Gambas? So Byron took up his pen and sent the Duchess a most pressing letter.

'Among the list of exiles on account of the late *suspicions* and the intrigues of the Austrian Government (the most infamous in history)—there are many of my acquaintances in Romagna and some of my friends; of these more particularly are the two Counts Gamba (father and son) of a noble and respected family in this city. In common with thirty or more of all ranks they have been hurried from their home without process—without hearing—without accusation. Their father is universally respected and liked; his family is numerous and mostly young—and these are now left without protection; the son is a very fine young man, with very little of the vices of his age or climate . . . Could your Grace, or would you, ask the repeal of both, or at least of one of these, from those in power in the Holy City? I can assure your Grace and the very pious Government in question, that there can be no danger in this act of *clemency*, shall I call it? It would be but justice with us—but here!—let them call it what they will.'[66]

The Cardinal's chief object in exiling the Gambas having been to get rid of Byron, it can be imagined that he was not too pleased to see Teresa still in Ravenna, with Mylord by her side. The next step, clearly, must be to expedite Teresa's departure. For this purpose Count Alborghetti sent for a

family friend and connection of the Gambas, Count Rampi of Faenza—'a wise, prudent and influential man'—and told him that Guiccioli had once again appealed to Rome, asking that Teresa should be obliged to return to him, or, failing that, be shut up in a convent. Teresa, in her version, implies that in actual fact Guiccioli never *did* make this appeal—though it would very probably have been granted if he had—and that the whole thing was a fabrication of Alborghetti's. In any case, Count Rampi believed it and, in all good faith, hurried to Teresa to warn her of the danger.[67] She at once sent off to Byron the following unhappy letter:[68]

'Only this was lacking to drive me to despair. I am in a terrible state—without you I shall never be able to make up my mind, shall never be able to reach a reasonable decision. Rampi has just left me, having been sent by Alborghetti to tell me that I must leave Ravenna before Tuesday, because Guiccioli has had recourse to Rome to demand that I shall either return to him, or be shut up in a convent. He says that the answer will come in a few days, that I must talk about it to no one—but leave at night—for if my plan were known, they might stop it, and take away my passport, which the goodness of Heaven has enabled me to obtain. Byron! I am in despair . . . If I have to leave you here without knowing when I shall see you again, I am resolved to stay.—But I hardly know what I am saying, I am in such a terrible state—and why?—not certainly on account of my own danger, but only—I call Heaven to witness—only on account of yours . . . Rampi and Alborghetti will call on you at about three o'clock to tell you all this. Your unhappy friend.

On hearing this news, Byron—'irritated and agitated by all these intrigues'—firmly advised Teresa to leave at once, a piece of advice with which her uncle, Marchese Cavalli, warmly agreed. The latter also very sensibly advised her to take with her all the papers relating to her separation, in case Guiccioli, who had considerable influence in Tuscany, should attempt to make trouble for her at the Court of the Grand Duke. So at last, in floods of tears, Teresa agreed to go, but

in a truly feminine manner begged at the last moment for just twenty-four hours' respite. 'Do not oppose this determination, my friend,' she wrote to Byron. 'One more day in the same place as you, is worth a century to me.'[69] She wished, she said, to drive out with him once again, and to see the new —and, as she believed—safer route that he had promised her to follow in future on his rides. 'How great is my gratitude', she added, 'for this new proof of your kindness—and of how great a weight it has relieved my heart—although it is still one of the most tormented on earth!'

The next morning, before leaving, she begged him, in equally high-flown language, for yet another favour—'like the last boon granted to condemned criminals'. This was, that—since she would not demand of him long letters in a foreign language, 'which might fatigue him'—he would always add at the bottom of Lega's letters by every post, the words 'I am well and we shall see each other again'.[70]

Byron, who by now would doubtless have promised anything to get her off, agreed, and meanwhile wrote to Prof. Costa in Bologna—Teresa's old teacher and a family friend—asking him to look after her there, and if necessary to take her on to Florence. The coach arrived, the postillions were mounted, and at last poor Teresa, 'more dead than alive', set forth. At the first halt, while the horses were being changed, she sent back the following note:

Faenza *July 25th*, 1821

I am writing here, in the presence of the Sisters*—where I am stopping while the Horses are being changed. My Love —I am utterly desolate—I do not know what will become of me before night! By the love you have felt for me—by all that you hold dearest on earth, swear to me to keep your vow —*never, never to go riding in the Forest*!!! With this hope I can breathe again—otherwise I should have died at parting from you. What an effort it cost me—several times I thought

* The Sisters of the Convent of Santa Chiara, where Teresa was educated.

I should have to give way—but I was sustained by the thought that it would have displeased you—and by the fear of losing you forever! In a few minutes I am leaving for Bologna—for pity's sake, my dearest, write at once to Florence—and if there is anything special to say, send a courier. The Postilion wants to start. Oh God! What a torment! Keep your promise—if not you will be cruel!!! I kiss you a thousand times.

Your friend and lover for ever.

When shall we see each other again, my dearest? T.G.G. Send for my letters at the post office. The postmaster has been notified, but send him the enclosed.

At Bologna, Teresa found the Costa family awaiting her and ready to take her at once to Florence. But once again, she confessed, her courage failed her entirely. 'She had not enough strength either of body or of mind to continue the journey.'[71] So, although she knew that by staying in the Papal States she was still exposed to the same dangers that had caused her to leave Ravenna, she wrote to implore Byron to let her return to Ravenna, or at least to meet her once again half-way, at Bagnacavallo. But now Byron was firm. This was the kind of feminine hysteria which jangled his nerves unbearably, and his answer is rather that of an exasperated husband than of a lover.

Teresa herself, later on, described her behaviour at this time as caused by 'a state of exaltation which must have seemed ridiculous', but excuses herself by saying that her apprehensions for Byron's safety were so strong, her sense that some terrible threat was menacing him, so persistent and, she frankly admits, so disproportionate to the actual circumstances, that she completely lost her head. She was suffering, she says, 'from feelings too deeply stirred and from an imagination which had become diseased'.[72]

The following is Byron's reply, and was followed, three days later, by another, even more exasperated letter, which at last succeeded in getting Teresa to start.

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI[78]

Ravenna *July 26th*, 1821

My Teresa: Pray calm yourself and continue your journey, in the certainty that we shall see each other again soon. If not in Ravenna, then we shall arrange about Switzerland, as soon as I get an answer from Geneva.—Yesterday I saw Uncle C[avalli] who gives some hope . . . Tonino* *is* in Rome, that is certain. Meanwhile don't give way to such unreasonable grief—but think of consoling your father and your brother.

I am sorry about the Duchess's absence†—I had hoped much from her kindness—but perhaps we may do as well without her.—Your plan of coming back here to see each other for a moment would be really folly -such a proposal really makes me think that you wish to be put in a *convent*—as was threatened.

I love you and shall love you as I have always loved you—but I cannot encourage such fatal madness as your return here would be, the day after your departure.

Lega will write to you enclosing two letters of today's post which I have received for you—as you asked. —

A thousand messages to Ruggero and Pierino.—Write often and quickly. Greet signor Costa and his wife, to whom I am very grateful for their friendship to your family.

'My daughter, be comforted, dry your tears'—and believe me (crede B. you know is my family motto) ever and entirely your friend and lover B.

P.S. Little gossip—get into a good humour—things will go better than you think . . . Thank you for the flower, which has kept much of its scent . . . Everything here is as it was at your departure.

July 29th, 1821

My Teresa: You left with the intention of joining your

* Marchese Antonio Cavalli, a leading Carbonaro and a cousin of Teresa.

† The Duchess of Devonshire, whom Byron's July letter had missed in Rome. He sent the letter on to her at Spa with a second note asking her to 'write a few lines to any of your Roman acquaintances in power'.—*L.J.*, V, p. 238.

family in Florence—that was the only respectable and reasonable excuse for you in the present circumstances. What is detaining you in Bologna? I do not know, and if I knew—I could not approve.—— Once again I *urge* you to continue your journey, for every reason. With your father you are safe—and besides—you are doing your duty as a daughter. Where you are, I can only see a woman without support, and not very kind,[74] who leaves her father in exile without taking an 18 hours' journey to console him.—If you believe that you are safe from the attempts already made (and that would be made again) to put you away in a convent so long as you remain in the *Papal States—you are mistaken.*

I am always your friend and lover B.

P.S. I hope to hear that you have left for Florence—then I will write to you in detail.

At last, on the 2nd of August, Teresa gathered her courage together and crossed the Apennines, still hoping, however, that a decree from Rome might allow her father to return to Ravenna, and herself with him. But instead she found him and her brother making their preparations for an immediate departure for Switzerland Count Ruggero had already sent a power of attorney to his uncle in Ravenna, Marchese Cavalli, and the plan was to sail from Pisa to Marseilles (to avoid passing through the States under Austrian rule) and to proceed from there to Switzerland. Pietro, especially, was fired with the idea, since he saw in Switzerland, according to Teresa, 'the only country left in Europe where we could still breathe the air of independence'.

At first Byron too had been inclined to favour the plan. 'This country being in a state of proscription', he had written to Hoppner on July 23rd, 'and all my friends exiled or arrested . . . I have determined to remove to Switzerland, and they also . . . I have written by this post to Mr. Hentsch junior, the banker of Geneva, to provide (if possible) a house for me, and another for Gamba's family . . . on the *Jura* side of the Lake of Geneva, furnished with stabling (for *me* at least) for eight horses. I shall bring Allegra with me . . .

We care nothing about society, and are only anxious for a temporary and tranquil asylum and individual freedom.'[75]

But Hentsch's answer was delayed; life in Ravenna, in spite of the clerical persecution, was still very pleasant; Shelley was expected; and so Byron took up his pen and wrote to both Teresa and Pietro—in the evident hope that his letters might keep them both quiet for a little longer.

BYRON TO PIETRO GAMBA

August 4th, 1821

My dear Pietro: A thousand thanks for your very welcome letter.—I cannot answer all that I should say, or would wish to,—Her Excellency ought to have arrived [line erased by Teresa]

She has written me a thousand insults from Bologna —because, in agreement with every sensible person and with all her friends and relations, I advised her to go to Florence, to join you and her father.—The thing was absolutely necessary —if she did not want to be put in a convent.—Ask anyone.—

I am seeing no one—my widower's rides are very tedious; I put holes in *two new shoes* of that poor devil with my pistol the day before yesterday- which cost me *twelve pauls.* One day I saw Tuda on the road—who looked like a lost lamb—squinting a little—and very sentimental about your desertion—She confessed that she had been with you several times, etc. etc.—but who knows if it is true.—Her beauty was however not such as to awaken envy in even the most jealous of women, Her Excellency.[76]

The Martini has disappeared from her usual window—in consequence of the exile of her beloved. Instead of her—I saw Mrs. Santino Fabbri there—of whom I was made aware by more senses than that of sight.—For the rest, all your numerous widows are inconsolable—one hears nothing but sighs—which makes a little breeze—a pleasant thing in this weather.

Lega will have written to Papa all my news and hopes and the steps we propose to take. Meanwhile I am and always shall be your affectionate and obliged friend.

P.S. 1000 messages to Papa. Be happy. [Here eight lines have been completely erased by Teresa, which begin: 'They write me from Paris that'] This was written before the arrival of yours. I am awaiting an answer from Switzerland where I wrote before Teresa's departure. Meanwhile let us wait a bit and see—Haste can but do harm to your family and to all of us. Lega has been told to write more in detail—

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

Ravenna *August 4th*, 1821*

My Teresa: I hope that you are happy in Florence—and safe with your relations. Lega, in the letter he is writing to Papa by this post, will explain in detail the reasons which rendered urgent your departure from Bologna—It is enough to say that Costa, Cavalli, and all your friends were persuaded that it was the only decision possible in your very delicate situation. For my part, I have nothing to reproach myself with, as to this advice—nor to reply to the insults with which it has pleased you to honour me in your recent letters.

I have received a noble and comforting letter from Pierino; it appears that he is preserving his friendship for me, which will always be reciprocated by me.

Here we are doing all we can for the return of Count Ruggero. I have sent off the letter to the D[uchess] of D[evonshire] who is now at Spa near Liège—but who could write from there to Rome. I have had no answer as yet to my letters from Geneva. I am awaiting your news with impatience.

As for me—I am neither well nor ill; my hopes are naturally turned towards you all.—I don't see anyone—I live with my books and my horses.

Without translating so many pages of *Corinne*, or forcing so great a semblance of romance, I assure you that I love you as I always have loved you; time will show, which of us will

* This letter is inscribed by Teresa: '1821. First letter to Florence after the exile of the Gambas.'

be the most untiring in our love. But in eloquence I give way to you for two reasons—firstly, I don't know the language—secondly, too many words are always suspect—the great *preachers* of exaggerated sentiment limit the practice of their maxims to their pulpit;—true love says little.

Please salute Papa and Pierino cordially and beg them to command me in everything—as their (and your) most sincere and affectionate friend.

Yet another letter to Pietro Gamba from Lega, written the next day, added little to what Byron had already said, and was followed by a postscript from Byron.[77]

It will be impossible for me to leave just now—before the arrival of my letters and of a relation of Allegra's* whom I am expecting at any moment from Pisa, to decide about the child's future. Your impatience is perhaps natural—but it doesn't seem to me necessary, under the circumstances, to be in so great a hurry to go one does not know where. In ten days I ought to have an answer from Geneva about the two houses. Always and entirely.

Pietro, however, must have continued to bombard Byron with letters expressing alike the nobility of his sentiments and the firmness of his determination to leave the country, for four days later Byron was writing again.

BYRON TO PIETRO GAMBA

Ravenna *August 9th*, 1821

My Dear Pietro: Your sentiments do you honour, but nevertheless I keep my own opinion regarding Count R.—your father—and Teresa. It is enough for me, however, to have expressed my reasons. If you are determined to go—go—and I will come,—I should have been much better pleased, and it would have been much better for everyone, if you had had the patience to wait for an answer from Geneva. Then you would have known precisely where to go—to a house—instead of finding yourself in a miserable inn full of travellers. As

* Shelley.

for myself—the idea of returning to Switzerland is most unpleasant—for many reasons—which you will become well aware of when we are there and it will be too late.—Teresa should certainly go with her father and her brother—but in spite of that protection—I am afraid that she will find herself in a very painful situation– on account of the gossip of all the good citizens of Geneva—and of the English travellers—for both of whom it is enough that people should enjoy *my acquaintance* for them to be exposed to the most infamous calumny. I hoped—and am still convinced—that with a little time and courage—your father will be able to return to R[avenna] and Teresa too, without trouble for either of them.

Teresa writes to me like a lunatic—as if I wished to give her up, etc. etc. If I had had that intention—why did I beg her to leave R[avenna]? and B[ologna]? In a few days—she would have been shut up in a convent—and the affair finished —without its being in the least my fault—in the eyes of the world. Assuredly I would not have taken so much trouble for a woman from whom I was planning a separation.

So far no answer has come—and my banker's drafts have not arrived, which certainly it would not be desirable to leave trailing around the country after my departure. They ought to have come three posts ago, and the delay surprises and annoys me. For me they are not necessary at present—for I have enough. But meanwhile I don't much like not knowing what has happened to a sum of several thousand scudi—which in the ordinary course of events should have arrived twenty days ago. It matters the more to me because Switzerland is perhaps the dearest country in Europe for foreigners, its people being the most canny and rascally in the world about all that has to do with money—and deceitfulness—and avarice. I only suggested a stay in that country because there seemed to be an absolute necessity for leaving Italy—and only because it is the nearest country. This *necessity* to leave no longer exists. The government of Tuscany is very mild—far, far milder than the present government of Geneva—which is now under the yoke of the anti-liberals.

A friend of mine here* is writing, at my request, to Teresa —some forcible reasons why it would be better to stay in Italy.

Believe me with the most complete esteem and friendship always your friend and servant

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

Ravenna *August 10th*, 1821

My Love: Pray do not render our unhappiness greater by unmerited reproaches. I have always been faithful and loyal to you and to all your family. My friend's letter, written at my request, will be a very veracious statement of the numerous reasons for not exposing ourselves to residing in the states of Switzerland. I have never thought of separating myself from you—but leave me a little time and freedom to think [what is best] for us—and above all for you. My letter to Pierino contains what I have to say on this subject. I will not say any more.

Love me as I love you, Entirely yours.

All this, however, was much too vague to satisfy Teresa — and at once a special messenger was sent by her across the Apennines, carrying a letter in which she implored Byron to keep his promises, and join her, not some day, but *at once*.

August 11th, 1821

'If your promises remain vague and uncertain, if the future holds nothing but anguish for me, shall I able to bear it? I am in a beautiful great city full of people, with my father and my brother—but I feel as if I were in a desert, and alone, quite alone . . . The two hours before sunset are two hours of agony for me.† The saddest thoughts, the most horrible visions, fill my imagination and torment me: the sight of a funeral, the cry of a night-bird—if you only knew

* Shelley.

† This was the time of Byron's daily rides, which she feared would end in his assassination.

what an effect they have on me! The night that follows such an inward struggle is consequently feverish. How shall the body not succumb to such a deep depression of soul?—I shall not leave Florence unless I am certain of seeing you again within a few days. I hate travelling, I hate everything that does not lead to the only object of my thoughts.'[78]

Her father and brother, she told Byron, had gone off to the races, but she had refused to go with them, she only wanted to write to him. 'My Byron, what are you doing? What are you thinking and feeling? What do you mean to do for your friend? Papa will not return to Ravenna, he says he will let all his property and take the family to a free country. Even if he were called back, he would not go home, because he does not believe in the promises of the priests. Pierino says the same—but I? I wish for nothing but to see my friend again —to live where he lives, I fear nothing but to lose him.'[79]

To all this Byron replied with extreme firmness.

Ravenna *August 13th*, 1821

Dearest: The letters from Geneva are not favourable to our departure. The State is full of English people—and every house is occupied—and so it will be for over fifty days more —until October.

Besides, Geneva and all its surroundings are full of English people, even in the winter. You know whether I could live in the same air as that race . . . Pray therefore abandon that plan—and persuade Ruggero and Pietro to do the same. We can establish ourselves in Tuscany; it will be much better from every point of view. . . .

My friend's letter[80] by the last messenger will have explained to you my situation in that country, Switzerland, in 1816. If you wish to renew my persecution, which would now be directed with equal fury against you, you have only to go to Switzerland. I still hope that with a little time and patience your father may be allowed to return to his own country—and that you will be able to go with him. If Pierino

is determined to travel—I do not oppose it. Certainly he would be much better off in his travels without so many ties—and without cutting the sorry figure that he would cut, if we were in his company . . . At any rate—if Papa is not allowed to return, we can establish ourselves in Tuscany.

At this point your letter has come, by the hand of one of the returned exiles. By now you will have had my answer. Your father is looking for a *free* country—where will he find it? Certainly not in Switzerland—where they exile once more those who have already been exiled.

My first choice would be for him to return to Ravenna. The second (but even that unwillingly), that he should establish himself in Tuscany--Switzerland does not seem to be at all suitable and I only thought of that country as preferable to San Leo.* Now that there is no more danger for him—to go to Switzerland would be—but—I have already expressed all this in my preceding letters. Always and ever yours

P.S. I have had a letter from the Benzoni, who greets you—so does her Beppe.† Greet Pierino and Papa for me.

The friend on whom Byron depended to influence Teresa and Pietro, was Shelley. He had arrived on August 6th to stay with Byron, after a most exhausting journey—travelling from Florence to Bologna 'all night, at the rate of two miles and a half an hour, in a little open carriage'--and thence proceeding at once to Ravenna, where he arrived at ten o'clock at night, and sat up talking with Byron until five the next morning. His impressions of Byron were wholly favourable. 'He has . . . completely recovered his health, and lives a life totally the reverse of that which he led at Venice.' Byron, as well as showing Shelley some of Teresa's letters, depicted her as a victim both of marital and clerical tyranny. 'She was compelled to escape from the Papal territory in great haste, as measures had already been taken to place her in a convent, where she would have been unrelentingly confined for life.'

* A fortress near Rimini, used for political prisoners.

† Conte Giuseppe Rangone, the Contessa Benzoni's Cavalier Servente.

Shelley's sympathy was instantly awakened—and his thoughts turned to Emilia Viviani, *in her* convent. 'The oppression of the marriage contract, as existing in the laws and opinions of Italy . . . is far severer than that of England. I tremble to think of what poor Emilia is destined to.'[81]

As to Byron's liaison, it was entirely in harmony with Shelley's own views—which, indeed, in this case, were nearer to the facts than those of Byron's other friends. 'This attachment', he told Mary, 'has reclaimed him from the excesses into which he threw himself from carelessness and pride, rather than taste.' And in a subsequent letter: 'L. B. is greatly improved in every respect. In genius, in temper, in moral views, in health, in happiness. The connection with *La Guiccioli* has been an inestimable benefit to him.'[82] Moreover, Shelley was naive enough to accept at its face value Byron's boasting about the riches and noble rank of his mistress's husband, the splendour of his own establishment. 'Lord B. has here splendid apartments in the palace of his mistress's husband, who is one of the richest men in Romagna.' Even the servants were seen in a romantic light. 'Tita the Venetian is here and operating as my valet; a fine fellow, with a prodigious black beard, and who has stabbed two or three people, and is the most good-natured looking fellow I ever saw.'

Only one unpleasant incident appears to have occurred: on August 15th Shelley, who wished to visit the Duomo, was refused admittance—and Byron at once sent off an indignant letter of protest to Alborghetti.[88]

August 15th, 1821

Dear Sir: An English gentleman and friend of mine has this day been refused admittance into the Duomo by the *Campanaro* in the most insolent manner. As I have not the honour of personal acquaintance with the Archbishop I should thank you to represent this to him. Whatever his feelings may be towards me—I presume that he does not encourage his people's insults to strangers, especially as I never encourage or protect mine in such things.

The readiness of your authorities to inculpate my servants on all occasions will not permit me to pass over this—If the Archbishop chastises his insolent dependent it is well, if *not*, I will find means to punish him at any cost. . . .

Excuse my troubling you, but as I do not know the Prelate personally and you do—I thought my application would come better thus than by a direct address. If he or others suppose that political circumstances have at all diminished my power to make myself properly respected—they will discover the difference. Believe me very truly yours, dear Sir

We have not got Alborghetti's answer—and Shelley's letters do not refer to the incident. He merely tells us that he and Byron spent the hours between two and six, every day, in conversation, rode together from six to eight, and then, after dining, talked again 'until six in the morning'. If some of their subjects were unpleasant and painful—the slander about the Shelleys spread by the Hoppners, the reproaches of Claire, and the fate of poor little Allegra—there was also much talk of politics and poetry; and finally, Byron succeeded in enlisting Shelley's aid in the solution of his own immediate problem: how to persuade Teresa and her young brother not to go to Switzerland. 'The gossip and the cabals of those anglicized coteries would torment him, as they did before, and might exasperate him to a relapse of libertinism, which he says he plunged into, not from taste but despair.' So Shelley was set to write, as he says, 'a long letter to her [Teresa] to engage her to remain—an odd thing enough for an utter stranger to write on subjects of the utmost delicacy to his friend's mistress . . . I have set down, in lame Italian, the strongest reasons I can think of against the Swiss emigration—to tell you truth I should be very glad to accept, as my fee, his establishment in Tuscany. Ravenna is a miserable place; the people are barbarous and wild, and their language the most infernal patois that you can imagine. He would be, in every respect, better among the Tuscans.'[84]

Teresa has printed Shelley's letter in an appendix to her

book, 'Lord Byron jugé par les témoins de sa vie',[83]—but she has unfortunately translated it from the Italian in which it was written into her own very peculiar French. Some passages, however, are worth quoting for their content.

'Allow me, Madam, to lay before you the reasons for which I feel that Geneva would be an undesirable retreat. Your circumstances present some analogy with those in which my family and Lord Byron found themselves, in the summer of 1816. Our houses were close together and, not seeking any other society, our mode of life was retired and tranquil; one could not imagine a simpler life than ours, or one less calculated to attract the calumnies that were aimed at us.

'These calumnies were monstrous, and really too infamous to leave us, their victims, even the refuge of contempt. The natives of Geneva and the English people who were living there did not hesitate to affirm that we were leading a life of the most unbridled libertinism. They said that we had formed a pact to outrage all that is regarded as most sacred in human society. Allow me, Madam, to spare you the details. I will only tell you that atheism, incest, and many other things—sometimes ridiculous and sometimes terrible—were imputed to us. The English papers did not delay to spread the scandal, and the people believed it.

'Hardly any affliction was spared us. The inhabitants on the banks of the lake opposite Lord Byron's house used telescopes to spy upon his movements. One English lady fainted from horror (or pretended to!) on seeing him enter a drawing-room.* The most outrageous caricatures of him and his friends were daily spread about; and all this took place in the short space of three months.

'The effect of all this on Lord Byron's spirits was very unfortunate. His natural gaiety had almost entirely left him. A man must be more or less than a Stoic to bear with such insults patiently.

'Do not delude yourself, Madame, with the idea that the English people—accepting Lord Byron as the greatest poet

* This lady was the novelist Mrs. Hervey.

of our time—would on that account abstain from troubling him and from persecuting him in so far as they were able. Their admiration for his works is involuntary and they slander him in consequence of their immoderate prejudices, as much as they read him, for their pleasure.

'You cannot, Madame, conceive the excessive violence with which a certain class of the English detest those whose conduct and opinions are not precisely modelled on their own. The systems of those ideas forms a superstition, which constantly demands and constantly finds fresh victims. Strong as theological hatred may be, it always yields to social hatred. This state of mind is, in Geneva, the order of the day, and was awakened in order to torment Lord Byron and his friends. I very much fear that similar causes would not fail to produce the same consequences, if the journey you are planning should take place. Accustomed as you are, Madame, to the gentle manners of Italy, you can hardly conceive what an intensity this social hatred has reached in less happy climes. I have had to experience this, I have seen all who were dearest to me inextricably entangled in these calumnies. My position had some analogy with that of your brother,* and this is why I am eager to write you all this, to spare you all the evils which I have so fatally experienced.'

By August 15th Teresa's answer had reached Ravenna. She thanked Shelley for his advice, and decided to take it. 'My representations,' wrote Shelley to Mary, 'seem to have reconciled them to the unfitness of that step. At the conclusion of a letter, full of all the fine things she says she has heard of me, is the request which I transcribe: "Signore, la vostra bontà mi fa ardita di chiedervi un favore—me lo accorderete voi? Non partite da Ravenna senza Mylord!" '†

All Shelley's chivalry, 'this chivalric submission of mine to

* The reference is to Claire, Allegra's mother, who was then living with the Shelleys. The whole letter, however, should be taken with caution.

† SHELLEY, op. cit., Letter LXXXI, August 18th, 1821. 'Sir—your kindness makes me dare to ask you a favour—will you grant it? Do not leave Ravenna without Mylord.'

the great general laws of antique courtesy, against which I never rebel, and which is my religion', was at once awakened. 'I shall reply, of course, that the *boon* is granted, and that if her lover is reluctant to leave Ravenna after I have made arrangements for receiving him at Pisa, I am bound to place myself in the same situation as now, to assail him with importunities to rejoin her.'

Byron, moreover—perhaps sincerely, so long as Shelley's charm was still influencing him—declared himself not only willing but anxious to start at once. 'Such is his impatience, that he has desired me to write to you to inquire for the best unfurnished palace in Pisa, and to enter upon treating for it.'[86]

Teresa had realized by now that Byron's mind was made up—and she accordingly gave way with a fairly good grace, even promising to go to Prato to look for a house there. She was, however, unable to resist the pleasure of indulging in 'hurt feelings' over the tone of his letters, writing to him: 'What have I ever wished for, except to live beside you? Why have you thought so many arguments necessary to convince me to remain in Italy, if you prefer to stay there? Before I knew you I had a will of my own—some preferences, some wishes—since I have known you they have all disappeared, to give place to one single feeling—and my will, wishes, pleasures, sorrows,—have for me one source only—and that source is you. This being so, you should not have thought it necessary to convince me, and I should be offended if I did not realize that you had done so only in order to convince my relations.'

Her father, she added, was also willing to give way to Byron's wishes and to settle in Prato, but her brother had still set his heart on going to Switzerland. 'He is determined to leave Italy and every other slave-country—because a free and persecuted man cannot endure the sight of chains, even of gold. But he is much attached to his family and friends, and says that he must unfailingly see you again, and will not go away until my future is settled and I do not need him any more.

'My dear Byron, I am a little more tranquil because I hope

to see you in a few days—and also because I trust that your excellent friend Mr. Shelley will grant me the favour I shall venture to ask him, which will add one more cause for the gratitude and affection that, as your friend, I feel towards him.'[87]

The next day Teresa and her father went to Prato, but their house-hunting seems to have been unsuccessful, for she told Byron it was a 'miserable, inhospitable town, without any house that was at all suitable'.

This letter was enclosed in one to Lega Zambelli, giving further particulars about Prato, 'an unbearable place, in which it is impossible to find a decent lodging . . . Who ever suggested the idea of living there?'—and ending with a postscript that is not without pathos: 'Lega, write me the truth. Is Mylord pretending? Or does he really mean to leave Ravenna? Tell me, Lega, I beseech you. This uncertainty is an unbearable torment for me.'[88]

But meanwhile Shelley had succeeded in persuading Byron to settle in Pisa, and on August 17th he was leaving Ravenna, taking Teresa and Pietro the following letters.

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

Ravenna *August* [16*th*,] 1821

My Love: My letters have arrived, so there is little to keep me here. My intention is to take a house in Pisa where there will be apartments for your family—and for me—separate, but near. If that does not please you—tell me—and we will take a separate house for each of us. This letter will be taken to you by the Englishman who is here now, and is leaving tomorrow. He will explain to everyone many things difficult and lengthy to set down in writing, which is not my talent in a language *not* barbarous. When all is decided, I will send a part of the household with the heavier effects, furniture, etc., needed for the house—then I will come with the others.

Greet Papa and Pietro. I am always

P.S. If you have found an apartment in Prato—and can find a house for me, it will do as well—but Pisa would be a more

agreeable place to stay in—according to what I am told. I am leaving Ravenna so unwillingly—and so persuaded that my departure can only lead from one evil to a greater one—that I have no heart to write any more just now.

BYRON TO PIETRO GAMBA

[*August 17th*, 1821]

Dear Pietro · Here is the result of the most reasonable ideas that I can form under the present circumstances. I shall, however, leave Ravenna most unwillingly—being convinced that my departure can do nothing but injure Teresa in every way.

The embarrassment (as always happens where the fair sex is concerned) is very great for her and for us- -for that reason it would have been a thousand times more respectable and prudent—if she and Count Ruggero could have returned here But the will of God- -or of the devil—or of the most sainted Lucrezia of Imola—and the most sainted grandparents—be done! ! A curse on all grandparents—on Lucrezia of Imola* and of any where else in the world!

A thousand greetings to Papa.

This letter was followed three days later, in answer to more complaints from Teresa about his silence, by an exasperated note saying that he had written by every post.

'We have not sent any other couriers, so as not to expose those poor devils to the infamous oppression which the last one met with on the road . . . If the letters have not arrived —blame the post and not us.'

Teresa—although she herself had written to tell Byron that one of the couriers had been arrested and flung into jail for two days—has enclosed this note in a folder on which she has pencilled the words 'Bad temper!'.

At last, on August 21st, Shelley arrived in Florence, and at once called upon Contessa Guiccioli, attempting to reassure

* Count Ruggero's sister, Lucrezia, married to a Count Ginnasi of Imola

her about Byron's safety, by telling her that he had given way to her wishes about giving up his rides in the loneliest parts of the pine-forest.

'Your letter,' Teresa wrote to Byron, 'your promises, your friend's visit, the assurance he has given me that I shall soon see you again, and that he on his part will at once take an apartment in Pisa for you, have given back to me a partial tranquillity—but complete tranquillity will only return to me on the day I see you again. My Byron, I am aware how great a sacrifice this move will be to you. How shall I be able to show you my gratitude? I have only affection to give to you, and that cannot be increased. I am very sorry to see that you are so reluctant to leave Ravenna, and have such forebodings for the future—but what else can be done?

'I vow that if it were allowed me I would fly to Ravenna, with the firm resolution of never leaving again, for my whole life, provided you too were willing to remain there. Since I have known you, I have had no other desire than to be where you are—and in your heart. But reason clearly shows that Papa will not be recalled for the present.

'Your friend has told me that he rode with you every day and has added a *detail* (*you will understand me*) which would increase my love for you, if it could be increased. I hardly hoped, I admit, to obtain this favour from you, which costs you a sacrifice. I thank you, my Byron!'[89]

Before her next letter she had seen Shelley again, and sent Byron an account of him. 'Your friend pleases me very much,' she told him. 'His countenance is full of goodness and talent. He came to see me twice, and I can assure you that he has been of a great comfort to me. But his health seems to be very poor. When first I saw him, I thought he was having an attack of fever, and yet he assured me that on the contrary, journeys were very good for him, and that he felt very well. But how, dear friend, how *is it* possible to be so thin, so worn out?'[90]

Teresa must have told Shelley how much she longed for Byron's arrival, for, as soon as he had arrived in Pisa, he

wrote to her—in fairly correct Italian—the following letter:

SHELLEY TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

Pisa *August 22nd*, 1821

I have only a moment in which to answer your letter, and I feel quite incapable of expressing to you my feelings about the confidence with which you have wished to honour me. I hope that you will find me worthy of it. Be assured that I shall omit no measure that may hurry the departure of Mylord, for I am certain that his happiness, no less than yours, depends on the nearness of her who has been his good Angel, of her who has led him from darkness to light, and who deserves not only his gratitude, but that of everyone who loves him

I have almost settled on your house, and hope to be in time to announce the signing of the contract, before the post goes. Forgive the rough phrases of a sincere heart and do not doubt the profound interest you have awakened in me, and that I am and always shall be, with the greatest devotion

Your servant and friend PIRCY B. SHELLEY

Pray give my friendly greetings to your esteemed brother.[91]

Shelley succeeded in securing the house for Byron—the Palazzo Lanfranchi on the Lungarno—and soon after the whole Gamba family moved to Pisa. But two months more passed before Byron joined them, and his letters in the interval show a most unlover-like tendency to delay.

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

August 24th, 1821

My Teresa: Lega will have told Pierino and Papa about the preparations for our journey to Pisa.[92] I have nothing more to add. When everything is arranged in Pisa and the furniture has arrived, etc., then we shall start.

You know that my letters are hardly ever long—and will not expect very much from this one—knowing that I have a great deal to think about. I do not deny that I am leaving

very unwillingly—foreseeing very serious evils for you all—and *especially for you.* I will not say more—you will see. I am

Greet Pietro and Papa.

Ravenna *August 26th,* 1821

My Teresa: We are getting ready—If there is any delay it will be that blessed Lega's—whom I abandon to your reproaches. Pray be in a good humour. I will come to you the moment I can. Hoping to see you equally[93] and less p.* I am always your friend and lover for ever

P.S. A thousand greetings to the two male Excellencies— that is Papa and Pierino. I am writing to Shelley, to settle on the house.

September 4th, 1821

Dear P . . .† That man Lega has not gone on with the preparations—so scold him well. For my part I am only waiting to see the business of the furniture, etc., finished What happened to Papa and Pierino? Are they in Pisa? Your letter does not speak of them . . .

Love me and believe me

P.S. Today I took Lega to the beach to teach him to swim—you can imagine that priest in the sea.

LEGA ZAMBELLI TO CONTE RUGGERO GAMBA

September 5th, 1821

Most Honoured Count: The noble Lord has heard that Count Guiccioli *might* take steps with the present Government against the *Contessina.* Whether this news be true or false, it is useful to know it in order to be careful and forestall any possible attack. The same noble Lord orders me to warn her for all ends and purposes by means of a special Messenger.

* p. stands for 'pettegola'—gossip. This letter was received by Teresa in Pisa.

† Erased. The word was pettegola—gossip.

This morning I posted a double letter to the Contessina, in the contents of which she will note the temporary delay in sending off the furniture.

Also today I have sent a message to your major-domo to send me the trunk, the guns and the box with the hunting equipment, but have received nothing up to now. Tomorrow I shall go myself to the said major-domo, and to Barezzi, and will do anything possible to obtain the things, which should have been handed over some days ago Now Tita has come back, whom I sent to the major-domo, and says that I shall have everything by tomorrow morning

With most respectful regards I have the honour to be your most obliged and devoted servant

LEGA ZAMBELLI

[in Byron's writing] il P[orco] F to*

There is a postscript from Byron

I did not say *he might*'— I said he *was doing it*—according to what I am told

That buffoon Lega tells things in his own way Besides Mr. Lega does all this—so that he *may* (or *can*) delay my departure I am writing this, so that you may know that the only reason that is keeping me here now is Lega's slowness I am always your affectionate friend rooo greetings to Teresa.

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

Ravenna *September 9th* 1821

Excellency P The Duchess of Devonshire has written the enclosed which Mr S[helley] will translate, if it interests you. Pray return it to me after reading. As for teachers of the *English language,* it would be better for the present to avoid giving any occasion for gossip You do not know the state of the factions in England—and the horrible things that are said about Shelley and me—and if you are not careful the English in Florence and Pisa will say that, *being tired of you,* I handed you on to him. I say this frankly

* Possibly Porco f——to , which might be mildly translated 'bloody swine'.

and openly, in so many words. So, having been warned—it depends on you to behave as you think best.

We are making preparations to leave Ravenna—which may well be quite useless—and has in many cases been entirely *contrary* to my ideas. A little patience would have put everything right, as you will see from the enclosed letter (of the lady).

We must also think of two things—the first is—that if Papa is recalled from exile *I shall return that instant* to Ravenna—and the second is—that if he is recalled *before my departure* —I shall not leave. As to the cost of the new house, etc., I would pay them willingly 1000 times so as not to have the trouble of moving for nothing. About that there will be no difficulty.

I am always

Greet Papa and Pierino.

The Duchess of Devonshire's answer, to which Byron refers, had been sent from Spa, Byron's letter having missed her in Rome. She promised to write to the Vatican. 'Believe me also that there is a character of justice, goodness and benevolence in the present Government of Rome, which, if they are convinced of the just claims of the Comtes de Gamba, will make them grant their request.'[94] But the Duchess's faith in the Vatican proved to be excessive.

As to the English lessons, Teresa says that she had written to tell Byron of Shelley's offer to teach her himself English, but that, as soon as she received his reply, she gave up the plan. She had then no idea of Shelley's reputation in England—'a reputation monstrously unjust, but nevertheless partly explainable'.[95]

And now comes a whole series of apologetic, explanatory letters to Teresa from the wretched Lega, describing his troubles over the packing, his bargaining with the carriers, his quarrels with the other servants, his applications for permits, which had to be renewed when their dates expired, his patience in bearing with the ill-humour of Mylord—in short all the turmoil that preceded so complicated and momentous a

move. They are the letters of a prolix, inefficient, stupid, but faithful bungler, who cannot see the point of all this hurry to leave a place where both he and his master would prefer to remain, and who seizes thankfully upon any pretext for delay. But it is possible to suspect that some of the excuses were Byron's, and that the master found it very convenient to put all the blame on the servant. Byron's own contribution to the correspondence is an occasional brief and hurried postscript.

In the first of Lega's letters, early in September, he announced that the packing of the furniture could not be completed until the end of the week—although an extra man was being employed as an upholsterer, and another was doing nothing but pack the books. Finally he told Teresa that her maid, who had previously promised to go to Pisa, had now gone back on her promise. Byron added a postscript:

'My Teresa: I am surprised that you should have condescended to write about a maid who had already refused to go to you—and who is little else than a public wh . . . I have no time to say more now. Write to me—love me.'

Lega's next three letters continue on the same lines. The first, on September 8th, announced a fresh cause of delay: the carriers of Ravenna had proved so exorbitant that Byron had asked Shelley to engage some from Pisa, to fetch all the luggage. 'I am poisoned', wrote Lega, 'by this further delay—but what is one to do, when one will not throw money away for nothing?' Mylord, he added, was well, and bathing every other day—but had, apparently, no time to write.

On September 15th Lega wrote that the permit for the convoy to enter Tuscany had expired; it was necessary to renew it before the travellers could start. Byron added a postscript:

Gossip Excellency! You have done well to scold the buffoon—and will do better still to scold him some more. He is not in good faith—meanwhile we are only waiting for the carriers

to get the things off. I will write more by the first post. I am always your friend and lover for ever.

P.S. Greet the two manly Excellencies; and tell Pierino that I have some things to tell him which would make him laugh if it were not Friday, as it is today, so I shall wait to see him —or to write on some other occasion. I kiss you [words cut out by Teresa] 100 times.'

On the 17th Lega wrote that the carriers had arrived: 'Tomorrow, if God wills, we shall begin to load.' But they had brought only three big carts and a smaller one, and it might be necessary to hire another. He begged that whoever put up the bed of Mylord on its arrival at Pisa, would see to it that the paint was touched up with good varnish, as it had been slightly damaged. This must be the same bed of which Lady Blessington gives such a fascinating description: 'I saw his bed in Genoa, when I passed through in 1826, and it certainly was the most gaudily vulgar thing I ever saw; the curtains in the worst taste and the cornice having his family motto of "Crede Byron", surmounted by baronial coronets. His carriage and his liveries were in the same bad taste, having an affectation of finery, but *mesquin* in the details, and tawdry in the *ensemble*: and it was evident that he piqued himself on them, by the complacency with which they were referred to . . . He has even asked us if they were not rich and handsome, and then remarked that no wonder they were so, as they cost him a great deal of money.'[96]

To Lega's note of the 17th, Byron added:

Gossip Ex[cellency]: We are all preparing—packing—sweating—swearing—and other *'ings*.

It has cost me two hours to put in order the archives of your Excellency's letters—being at least five hundred; a full translation of *Corinne*—i.e. *The Gossip*, the romance of Her Excellency Our Lady Countess Gaspara Domenica Teresa Guiccioli, born Gamba Ghiselli and Respected Gossip.

Love me. Always and entirely yours.

P.S. 1000 messages to Papa and the fraternal Excellency. Go on scolding Lega—who deserves it more every day.

At the same time Byron was writing to Moore: 'I am in all the sweat, dust and blasphemy of a universal packing of all my things, furniture, etc., for Pisa, whither I go for the Winter.' Teresa, he said, had been obliged to follow her father, 'because the Pope's decree of separation required her to reside in *casa paterna*, or else, for decorum's sake, in a convent. As I could not say with Hamlet "Get thee to a nunnery", I am preparing to follow them. It is awful work, this love, and prevents all a man's projects of good or glory. I wanted to go to Greece lately (as everything seems up here) with her brother, who is a very fine, brave fellow (I have seen him put to the proof) and wild about liberty. But the tears of a woman who has left her husband for a man, and the weakness of one's own heart, are paramount to these projects, and I can hardly indulge them.'[97]

On the 23rd, the four carts got off, carrying furniture, books, saddles, Pierino's dogs, and even Teresa's 'nerve lotion'. 'Mylord's house', writes Lega sadly, 'now seems a desert. I am sleeping on bare straw, with every comfort lacking.'

Byron adds:

Goss. Excellency—

'The wood is desolate,' etc. etc.—there's no comfort left for a cat. . . .

Lega will leave in a few days, I towards the first of next month. I want to leave in time for the convoy to arrive and the various animals of my Natural History—of, not Buffon, but Buffoon. I greet Your Gossip tenderly. I am, with the usual bows to the other two Excellencies,

Your most humble, devoted, obliged, etc. Servant

P.S. I cannot understand your hatred for a town where you have never been persecuted and where you were born. If *I* do not love *my* country—there is more than one reason, as

your Excellency well knows. As to the rest, I am leaving because *you* wish me to—but I warn you that it is very improbable that I shall not return here—at the first opportunity—and before long.

But still Mylord managed to delay. On the 28th Lega wrote that he was getting off at last—together with 'the carriage and saddle-horses, the landau and the green wagonette'—and that he would travel over the Apennines by Covigliaio, Pistoia and the Via Pisana, without touching Florence. But on October 5th he was still in Ravenna, and a hurried P.S. from Byron provided a new excuse:

October 5th, 1821

My Love: We should have left this week, had it not been for the uncertainty caused by the rumour, which has now become general, about a new exile of the Romagnoli in Tuscany, which was told me by Uncle Cavalli.

Tell me the truth—and what I shall do (if it is true) so that we may meet. Believe me always— all yours—

The rumours of fresh severities against the Liberals were well founded. On September 13th the Pope had issued an Encyclical against the Carbonari, menacing with Excommunication all those who still persisted in remaining within their ranks. 'Their Society', the Encyclical said, 'while pretending singular respect for the Catholic religion and for the person and tradition of Jesus Christ', and 'exacting from its followers the practice of charity and every kind of virtue', was nevertheless to be condemned for its false doctrines, and in particular for teaching its followers to rise against their rulers and to punish with death those who betrayed their secrets.'[88]

The effect of the Pope's words was great and immediate. Throughout Italy large numbers of good Catholics, who until then had believed that they could reconcile their religion and their political ideals, sacrificed the latter, and not only confessed all their own misdeeds, but very frequently gave away their fellow conspirators as well.

'One cannot imagine', says a report in the *Diario di Roma*

of October 5th, 'the impression produced by the Papal Bull against the Carbonari. We have had a very large number of people saying aloud, in accents of the greatest distress, that they abjured their association, that they had been deceived, that they had been told that the Society was approved by the Pope.'[99]

Teresa too describes the dismay produced by the Encyclical —and the sudden change of heart that it effected in many of the Catholic Liberals Moreover, it was believed that their defection would result in a more violent persecution of the remainder, and that the Vatican would try to influence the Tuscan 'Buon Governo' to expel such men from Tuscany, too

At the same time, a certain number of exiles, owing to the petitions of their families, had been allowed to return to Ravenna, but Teresa said that this permission had been obtained only by those exiles who were prepared to bribe the Curia and to accept any condition imposed upon them by the Church 'Pietino', she wrote, 'has assured me that Papa will never do anything so dishonourable as to *buy* the venal Roman Curia, and that he would prefer never to go home, than to return there ashamed and dishonoured!'[100]

All these uncertainties and hopes, however, had given Byron a fresh excuse to delay, and now increased his unwillingness to start. Teresa, in one of her sudden movements of perceptiveness, remarks that Ravenna had become for him a *harbour*—the only place where he felt safe[101] Only by proclaiming that he would certainly return there, and soon, could he bear to go away at all He clung to this hope as if to counteract the unreasonable weight of foreboding that now oppressed him And yet, try as he would, he could not wholly shake it off 'I am convinced that my leaving Ravenna can only lead from one evil to greater ones.'

He was feeling ill, too· he had caught an 'intermittent fever', probably a form of malaria, which was prevalent at Ravenna at that time—and had occasional attacks which left him feeling 'as if one had got rid of one's body for good and all'.[102] He was so low that, even though, one evening,

'under the thin crescent of a very young moon', he walked 'in an avenue with a Signora for an hour', he felt so unromantic ('and yet it was a *new* woman—that is, new to me—and of course expecting to be made love to') that he 'merely made a few commonplace speeches'. 'I feel, as your poor friend Curran said, before his death, "a mountain of lead upon my heart", which I believe to be constitutional, and that nothing will remove it but the same remedy.'[103]

Teresa was gone—the Gambas were gone—his horses and 'menagerie' were on the road to Pisa—his Carbonari cronies were scattered—his revolutionary adventure had come to an end. In the great, bare rooms of Palazzo Guiccioli—barer than ever now, with the books packed and even most of the furniture removed—Byron spent his evenings alone, looking back, thinking of the past. This was for him one of those rare interludes when, before a new act begins, there is a breathing space in which to remember, measure and appraise. What was left, at the last, of all that the years had brought? 'My master, the Padre Pasquale Aucher . . . assured me that "the terrestial Paradise had been certainly in Armenia", I went seeking it—God knows where—did I find it? Umph! Now and then for a minute or two'[104]

In that 'minute or two' lies the key, I think, to much of Byron's life—and certainly to all the 'debauchery', about which so much too much fuss has been made—by others, and most of all by himself.

'No man would live his life over again, is an old and true saying, which all can resolve for themselves. At the same time there are probably *moments* in most men's lives, which they would live over the rest of life to *regain*. Else why do we live at all? Because Hope recurs to Memory, both false: but—but—but—and this *but* drags on till—What? I do not know, and who does?'[105]

Life at Ravenna, what had it given him? Popularity, certainly, with the poor. A fresh petition (the second) had been sent by them to the Cardinal, imploring him not to let the kind, the unfailingly generous Mylord go. A certain com-

panionship with the Carbonari—a fraternal, slightly condescending affection for Pietro Gamba. But no *equal* friendships, none to compare with those of his youth. Certainly no intellectual bond. Except for one reference to Giordani and one to Mezzofanti the linguist, there is in all the pages of the Ravenna Journal no mention of any Italian friend. Memories of Harrow and Cambridge—a long list of the men he had been compared to—London friends—Lewis, Rogers, Curran, Grattan, Clare, Sheridan,—his London clubs—again Harrow and Cambridge—these, in the evenings at Palazzo Guiccioli, filled Byron's thoughts. Of his whole life in Italy there is only one other mention, and that is an Englishman's comment 'Lewis said to me: "Why do you talk *Venetian* (such as I could talk, not very fine, to be sure) to the Venetians, and not the usual Italian?" I answered, partly from habit, and partly to be understood, if possible "It may be so," said Lewis, "but it sounds to me like talking with a *brogue* to an *Irishman*" '[106]

What then was left? Teresa? Well, yes, Teresa. 'I can say that, without being so furiously in love as at first, I am more attached to her than I thought it possible to be to any woman after three years (except *one* and who was she—can *you guess?*) and have not the least wish or prospect of separation from her.'[107]

To whom is he writing? To Augusta, of course—as once before in a very similar mood in Venice—to Augusta, to whom, sooner or later, the truth must out. But this letter—which tells the whole story of his liaison, from the time of his second return to Ravenna to his present plan of joining her in Pisa—strikes a new note: one of absolute finality:

'This is a finisher; for you know when a woman is separated from her husband for her *Amant*, he is bound both by honour (and inclination, at least I am) to live with her all his days . . . So you see that I have closed as Papa *began*, and *you* will probably never see me again as long as you live . . . It is nearly three years that this *liaison* has lasted. I was dreadfully in love, and she blindly so—for she has sacrificed

everything to this headlong passion. That comes of being romantic.'[108]

Yes, 'this is a finisher'. And again he turns to his Journal. 'I have written my memoirs, but omitted *all* the really *consequential* and *important* parts I sometimes think that I should have written the *whole* as a *lesson*, but it might have proved a *lesson* to be *learnt* rather than avoided: for passion is a whirlpool, which is not to be viewed nearly without attraction from its Vortex.'[109]

And, a few pages later: 'Man is born *passionate* of body, but with an innate though secret tendency to the love of Good in his Mainspring of Mind But God help us all! It is at present a sad jar of atoms'[110]

Heigho—perhaps, after all, it was best to take the road to Pisa and Teresa. But if only she would not go on being so romantic!

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

Ravenna *October 12th*, 1821

My Love: Now that you are certain that I am coming—a few days more or less can make no difference—nor should they upset you. It is necessary that I should wait for another post (only on the 18th) to have the answer to a packet sent to England last month. I expected it yesterday, but since it has not come, I must wait this week. If it does not arrive on Thursday I will start all the same, without delaying further. For five days we have had nothing but pouring rain—Otherwise I would have sent off my horses this morning. With all this the roads are in an awful condition for the Dutch horses which the coachman naturally wishes to preserve in good health [torn] man servant who was your coachman (and now I don't know what) I never made any promise to take him into my service and now I cannot do so—without turning out one of my own—which would be an injustice, unless first they had failed in their duties. If this man is ill I will do everything possible to come to his aid and then he shall be paid, for the time he has stayed with the furniture and for his work—but I can neither do nor promise anything

more. Greet Papa and Pierino in all cordiality and friendship.

Keep well. And do not exaggerate with that turgid epistolar imagination of Santa Chiara—(blessed be the Convent) the most simple and necessary things into evils and wrongs, etc. etc., which do not exist except in your romanesque or rather *romantic* head. For it upsets all the rules of thought in order to behave *à la De Staël*. Forgive this sermon. In the hope of seeing you again soon,

I am, as I have always been, your Friend and Lover for Ever.

P.S. I leave Lega to your very just indignation and deserved punishment. We will do with him what you will on my arrival. He will start two or three days before me—I believe on the 20th, that is Saturday But it will depend a little on the weather on account of the more delicate horses. I am thinking of leaving Ravenna on Monday week--the 22nd of this month.

October 19th, 1821

My Love: Lega leaves tomorrow, definitely.—He will be accompanied by all the grooms, etc. etc.; with the horses and two carriages

I shall leave within the week—towards Thursday, probably. I assure you that the slowness and confusion of Lega is something astounding, surpassing my not slight opinion of his *qualities*.

You have added to the various troubles that I have had to encounter recently with your complaints, etc., about my *non*-departure. I left the moment it was possible. Pray spare me more complaints—which are neither just nor reasonable.

Hoping to embrace you soon—I am with all my heart your friend and lover for ever

P.S. Pray scold and even *beat* (with those) Lega. Beat him well he deserves it—if it were not for my *insistence* he would not have started even now.

By now Teresa must have almost despaired of Byron's

coming. Two days later Shelley was writing: 'When may we expect you? The Countess is very patient, though sometimes she seems apprehensive that you will *never* leave Ravenna.'

But on the 23rd Lega was off at last—and Byron on the point of following him—although still with greater concern for the Dutch horses, than for his mistress's impatience.

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

October 23rd. 1821

My Love: Lega left on Saturday—my departure is settled for next Saturday—that is in four days . . . I hope you will be pleased. Lega should be in Pisa before this note—but supposing that the rapidity of that man's journey corresponds to his other movements—this note may arrive before the fool.

I have preferred to give him a week to do the journey—if I had started first he would never have got to Pisa. He has already committed one crime in paying too much to a coachman for two horses to Lugo. But I shall not pay him, when we come to the travelling accounts. The help of these horses was necessary, to save from too much fatigue the two Dutch horses, the coachman's favourites. . . .

Greet Papa and Pierino for me, and I embrace you *à la Corinne.*

Love me—my love—I am always yours F.a.L.f.E.

P.S. I am sorry about the servant's illness. See that nothing necessary for his health is lacking. Being still young, we can hope for him.

October 26th, 1821

My Love: The day after tomorrow I shall start. The weather is not very favourable, but that does not matter much—it mattered more for the Dutch horses, which must already be in Pisa.

So let us hope to see each other before long—be reassured and believe me yours F.a.L.f.E.

P.S. Vittoria is marrying a man from Imola (I am told). Tuda is making love with the new Vice Legate (another bit

of gossip perhaps)—all Pierino's loves are already provided for therefore; old and young; the grandparents are in the country still—Giulia is here. Grandfather continues to have that inconvenient facility for . . . but otherwise is well. The two boys were in town but have already returned to the Villa. Greet the other two Excellencies.

This is Byron's last letter from Ravenna. He left behind him—in the charge of Pellegrino Ghigi, his banker at Ravenna—those animals of his menagerie which even he thought too unattractive to take with him all the way to Pisa: 'a Goat with a broken leg, an ugly peasant's Dog, a Bird which would only eat fish [the Egyptian crane?], a Badger on a chain, and two ugly old Monkeys.'[111] On October 29th, at last, he left the Palazzo Guiccioli and set off in his great travelling coach on the road to Pisa. 'There are probably moments', he had written only two weeks before, 'in most mens' lives which they would live over the rest of their life to regain.' And now, on this most reluctant journey, he encountered one of these moments. His coach and that of another English traveller met; they both got out, and suddenly recognized one another. It was the friend of his boyhood—the man of whom he had written, a fortnight before, that he could never hear his name mentioned without a beating of the heart'—Lord Clare. The meeting only lasted a few minutes, on the road, but it 'annihilated for a moment all the years between the present time and the days of *Harrow*. It was a new and inexplicable feeling, like rising from the grave'.[112]

Three or four days later—after a short pause in Bologna and Florence—Byron was in Pisa with Teresa. He brought with him some verses written between Florence and Pisa—which, whether out of kindness or because it was really so, he allowed Teresa to believe were inspired by her. She would have been less than a woman, had she not then forgiven the long months of waiting.

Oh FAME! If I e'er took delight in thy praises,
'Twas less for the sake of thy high-sounding phrases,

Than to see the bright eyes of the dear One discover,
She thought that I was not unworthy to love her.

There chiefly I sought thee, there only I found thee;
Her glance was the best of the rays that surround thee,
When it sparkled o'er ought that was bright in my story,
I knew it was Love, and I felt it was Glory.

7 : PISA—MONTENERO

A heroine by the side of a poet
LEIGH HUNT

'At that time the rumour spread in Pisa that an extraordinary man had arrived there, of whom people told a hundred different tales, all contradictory and many absurd. They said that he was of royal blood, of very great wealth, of sanguine temperament, of fierce habits, masterly in knightly exercises, possessing an evil genius, but a more than human intellect. He was said to wander through the world like Job's Satan . . . It was George Byron. I wished to see him, he appeared to me like the Vatican Apollo.[1]

This passage, written by Francesco Domenico Guerrazzi, who was then a student at Pisa University—gives an impression of the legendary aspect which Byron took on for Italians during the latter part of his stay in Italy, and which was one of the fruits of his isolation. In Venice, at least at first, he had moved freely in Venetian society; in Ravenna he had shared in Italian family life and taken part in local politics. In both places, although always considered a *straniero*, he had become, at least for a few intimates, a *real* person, a human being of flesh and blood. But in Pisa, and later on in Genoa, he never made friends with any Italians of his own station at all. Like so many other Englishmen abroad, he lived in a narrow, and highly eccentric, circle of his own fellow-countrymen, regarding the country in which he was living merely as a stage-setting, with shifting scenery, on which to enact his own dramas.

It was in this that Byron's contemporaries differed from the travellers of the preceding century. The young man of the eighteenth century, on his 'grand tour', frequented as a matter of course the society of the lands he visited. Travel was then the prerogative of a single class; the aristocratic

salons of Europe did not recognize national barriers. But in the nineteenth century another kind of traveller appeared, the middle-class intellectual. These 'romantics' sought the beauties of nature rather than the pleasures of society; they carried their own world with them, and, with few exceptions, felt little need for any human contacts with the inhabitants of the countries they visited—except for their servants, their coachmen, or an occasional mistress. This attitude, which has not made the British race beloved abroad, has also given prominence to the eccentricities from which few of its distinguished travellers have been free. They have always remained behind the footlights, and it is hardly surprising that their foreign audience—never coming close enough to them to see the man beneath the make-up—judged them exclusively by their very curious appearance and behaviour.

The little group of English people in Pisa whom Byron now joined was certainly, to all outward appearances, very odd. There was that tall, thin, bony young man, Mr. Shelley ('il Capitano Scellyny, sedicente Ateo', as he appeared on one of the official reports of his death), who wandered about the city in a short school-boy's jacket reading an encyclopaedia, who left his meagre dinner of bread and water untasted on the mantelpiece, who disappeared into the forest for hours together, and who lay motionless at the bottom of a pool in the Arno, when a friend tried to teach him to swim. There was old Mr. Dolby, who went about singing at the top of his voice, his pockets bulging with books, and young Mr. Taafte —stout, pompous and amiable—interminably holding forth about his Commentary and his translation of Dante, but wholly unable to control his horse, which seemed to take pleasure in depositing him in the gutter. There was Walter Savage Landor, who refused to speak to any other Englishman; and, later on, the Leigh Hunts, who could hardly be prevailed upon to speak to an Italian. There was an elderly clergyman, Dr. Nott, who held religious services every Sunday for a dozen or so of his fellow-countrymen, and took the opportunity to attack, in the most violent terms, the

atheism of the husband of one of his small congregation.* And, strangest of all, there was that great hawk-like sailor, as dark as an Arab, with flashing eyes and teeth, loquacious and violent—a Pirate out of a school-boy's picture-book, Trelawny. As for Byron, even Trelawny, who 'saw no peculiarity' in the costume (a braided tartan jacket, loose nankeen trousers and blue velvet cap) in which the poet rode abroad, yet observed that 'his long absence had not effaced the mark John Bull brands his children with, the instant he loomed above the horizon, on foot or on horseback, you saw at a glance he was a Britisher'.[2]

The family relationships of these people, too, were somewhat confusing. The real name of the brawny, middle-aged lady, 'as stiff as a grenadier', 'with gigantic naked arms' and a mild, beaming countenance, who had lived in Pisa in complete domestic seclusion for the past eight years with a young Irishman and their two little girls was apparently Lady Mountcashell and *his* name was Mr Tighe But they called themselves simply Mr and Mrs Mason. Then there were Ned and Jane Williams—a charming young couple with two small children, and deeply in love But Jane was not really Mrs. Williams, she was the wife of a brother-officer of Ned's. Yet apparently both the Masons and the Williams were accepted by their friends as respectable married couples.

The position of Contessa Guiccioli was far easier to assess. She was simply Byron's mistress, and there was no question of her going about in the society of Pisa. She lived quietly with her father and brother in a small house on the Lungarno, Casa Parra, while waiting, with such patience as she could muster, for Byron's arrival.

Too much has already been written about Byron's and Shelley's circle in Pisa, to repeat the same stories here. The Gamba papers contain no new letter of Byron's during this time, and only a few short notes of Teresa's. But the 'Vie', which at this point becomes more detailed and prolix than

* Dr. Nott, said Byron, had revised one of the Ten Commandments to read: 'Thou shalt Nott, bear false witness against thy neighbour.'

ever, does throw some amusing sidelights on Byron and his friends, as seen through Teresa's anxious, critical, and often bewildered eyes. From the only society she had known until then—that of the Convent-school of S. Chiara, of the provincial drawing-rooms of Ravenna, and of the formal 'conversazioni' of Venice,—she was suddenly plunged into this strange foreign world. It is hardly surprising that she did not quite know what to make of it.

In the time before Byron's arrival, she saw no one but the Shelleys and the Williams. They were sorry for her, and kind. Shelley offered to teach her English; Mary, and sometimes Jane, went out driving with her. But none of them had a very clear idea of what she was really like. To Mary she seemed 'a nice pretty girl without pretensions, good-hearted and amiable'; to Shelley, 'a very pretty, sentimental, innocent, superficial Italian, who has sacrificed an immense fortune for the sake of Lord Byron; and who, if I know anything of my friend, of her, and of human nature, will hereafter have plenty of leisure and opportunity to repent her rashness'.[3] As for Teresa, she thought Jane Williams charming, 'gentle and sweet', and her life with Williams 'a true idyll'. Besides, she admired Ned Williams for his simple masculinity, as 'un officier qui a chassé le Tigre et le Lion et dont la conversation honnête et animée portait sur ces sujets'.[4] Mary, on the other hand, with her bookishness and her cold, prim manner, was a little intimidating. She refers to her frequently as 'une femme supérieure', who possessed 'a high intelligence and a noble heart', but it is evident that she was never wholly at ease with her, and she takes some pleasure in stating that 'Byron did not feel much liking for her'.[5] For Shelley alone—in all the group of alien human beings among whom she now found herself—Teresa had nothing but admiration and praise.

'Lord Byron', she writes, 'had often spoken to her about Shelley, and she was prepared to see a remarkable man, but the reality surpassed her expectations. Shelley was really not a man like any other, he was an unequalled combination of contrasts and harmonies, both physical and moral . . . It was

said that in his adolescence he was beautiful—but at this time he was so no longer. His features were delicate, but irregular—except for the mouth, which, however, was ugly in laughter and was a little spoilt by his teeth . . . His skin, which one could see must have been fine, had been marred—either through exposure to the weather or through poor health—by freckles. His hair, which crowned a very small head, was chestnut-coloured and abundant, but not well cared-for, and had already got some premature threads of silver. He was very tall, but so bent that he seemed of ordinary height, and although his figure was so fragile, his bones and joints stood out too much, even grossly. And yet all these details, themselves unbeautiful, still formed an extremely sympathetic being—and really one must use the word being, for truly Shelley seemed rather Spirit than man. He was also extraordinary in his dress, for he generally wore a schoolboy's jacket, never any gloves, and unpolished shoes—and yet, among a thousand gentlemen, he would always have seemed the most accomplished. His voice was high-pitched—even strident—but nevertheless took on inflections, to suit his thoughts, of a grace, a softness and a delicacy which went straight to the heart.'[6]

Yet Shelley, too, sometimes behaved in a manner that must have seemed to Teresa more than a little odd. On returning home, for instance, one day in Carnival, after he had been obliged to thread his way among the merrymakers thronging the Lungarno, he flung himself half-fainting in a chair, 'overpowered by the atmosphere of evil passions in that sensual and intellectual crowd'.[7] In the midst of a philosophical argument with Byron, he flung up his arms and cried, 'I do believe, Mary, he is little better than a Christian!' And, having heard a rumour that a man who had stolen a chalice from an altar was to be burned alive in Lucca for sacrilege, he came rushing to Byron to suggest that they should at once form a company to ride to Lucca and rescue the victim by force![8] Such hysterical behaviour was not likely to appeal to any sane Latin woman. As for Shelley's championship of Emilia Viviani, Teresa thought it remarkably silly. To be in

a convent, while waiting for her wedding-day—even with a man she did not like—seemed to her a very natural fate for any young woman. Emilia's sufferings, she concluded, had been greatly exaggerated by her admirer. So highly developed an imagination, and so intense a sensibility as his, 'si parfois elles produisent le sublime, plus souvent produisent le bizarre, l'incompréhensible, et même le ridicule.'[9] She declared herself thankful that Byron's genius did not take this form, 'if by imagination one means that poetic exaltation which stretches to the last boundaries of human reason, and sometimes oversteps them.'[10]

Yet Byron's imagination, too, sometimes ran away with him. The Palazzo Lanfranchi on the Lungarno, which Shelley had taken for him, was a fine Renaissance palace, whose foundations descend to the edge of the river. Byron, however, —recognizing the name Lanfranchi as that of one of the tormentors of Conte Ugolino in Dante's *Inferno*—preferred to refer to his new abode as 'a famous old feudal palazzo, large enough for a garrison, with dungeons below and cells in the walls . . . There is one place where people were evidently *walled up*, for there is but one possible passage, *broken* through the wall, and then meant to be closed again upon the inmate.'[11]

From this it was an easy step to imagine the presence of ghosts. 'Fletcher', said Shelley to Medwin, 'is as superstitious as his master, and says the house is haunted, so that he cannot sleep from rumbling noises overhead, which he compares to the rolling of bowls. No wonder, old Lanfranchi's ghost is unquiet and walks at night.'[12]

In sober fact, however, the houses on this part of the Lungarno did not exist at the time of Conte Ugolino, and the underground dungeons were merely the storehouses of the silk-merchants of Pisa, from which they used to load their wares on to the Arno barges.[13]

The palazzo,—haunted or not—was an admirable setting for Byron's present mode of life. According to Teresa he was, after his long period of seclusion in Ravenna, in a most sociable mood. As at Ravenna, he worked during the greater

part of the night, rose late, and breakfasted only on a cup of bitter green tea—and, after dinner, spent most of his evenings with Teresa. But the greater part of the afternoon was spent in long rides with Shelley, Williams, Trelawny, Taaffe, Medwin, and any other visitor who turned up—and on every Wednesday he gave a men's dinner party, at which he entertained his guests with a grace, a generosity, an affability which has never been surpassed Never, said Shelley, did Byron display himself to more advantage than on these occasions, being at once polite and cordial, full of social hilarity and the most perfect good humour, never diverging into ungraceful merriment, and yet keeping up the spirit of liveliness throughout the evening [11]

These evenings, according to Teresa, often prolonged themselves far into the night, and she comments somewhat acidly that 'Mr Medwin was always the last to leave the hospitable board It was on these occasions, she adds, unfavourable to exactitude, that Medwin collected the material for the *Conversations with Lord Byron* which he published so soon after his host's death and which Teresa describes as 'an exploitation of the honour of an acquaintance that so many people desired in vain * The adjectives which she applies to this book are light exaggerated, indelicate—partly indiscreet and partly untrue' And she proceeds to enumerate nine inaccurate statements in it—including the confiscation of the property of Count Gamba, the return of Byron from the East on account of his mother's death, 'Byron's plans for his daughter Allegra', 'The black hair of Mme la Comtesse Guiccioli', and 'the peacocks of Byron's menagerie'.

Byron, she says, found Medwin's company pleasant enough, but had so poor an opinion of his character that when, one evening, Teresa's carriage was late and she accepted Medwin's arm to go home, Byron afterwards scolded her severely, 'saying that he was not a man with whom a young woman could allow herself to be seen in public' [15]

It was ungrateful of Teresa to be so superior about Med-

* 'Vie, pp 900-1. Byron himself, however, was fully aware of what his guest was about

win, for, of all Byron's biographers, he is, with the exception of Moore, the one who has been kindest to her. It was he who granted her 'eyes large, dark and languishing (and) shaded by the longest eyelashes in the world', and 'the most beautiful mouth and teeth imaginable'.

'It is impossible', he added, 'to see without admiring, to hear the Guiccioli speak without being fascinated. Her amiability and gentleness show themselves in every intonation of her voice, which, and her perfect Italian, give a peculiar charm to everything she utters. Grace and elegance seem component parts of her nature.'[16]

Moreover, he was tactful enough to attribute her occasional melancholy, not—like Trelawny or the odious Leigh Hunt to any deficiency of Byron's, but to such a highly respectable cause as 'the exile and poverty of her aged father'.* But on the other hand, while admitting that Byron was 'very much attached to her', he added the words, 'without actually being in love'.[17] Perhaps it was this that Teresa could not forgive.

But it was Trelawny who, of all the strange creatures whom Teresa now encountered, seemed to her the strangest and most incomprehensible It is probable that, left to herself, she would have found his extreme masculinity, his resounding voice and his tall stories, attractive, she would have taken him at his own valuation. Certainly the Shelleys, in early days, did so. They and the Williams spent part of the spring in planning a romantic drama to be founded upon his singular adventures,—the tale of 'a Pirate, a man of savage but noble nature', of which Shelley actually wrote the first 250 lines.[18] But Byron, from the first, was on his guard.

'I have met today the personification of my Corsair,' he told Teresa after Trelawny's first call upon him. 'He sleeps with the poem under his pillow, and all his past adventures and present manners aim at this personification.'—'I feel curious to see him,' said Teresa. 'You will not like him,' Byron firmly replied.[19]

And indeed when, the next day, Teresa met him in the

* The Count was then fifty-four.

street, as he was riding home with Byron, she declared herself terrified by his *étrange regard*, and begged Byron to give up the acquaintance. Byron, however, only laughed at her, and continued to see Trelawny every day. Soon he began to plan the building of the *Bolivar*, of which Trelawny was to be the captain. Teresa says—but this is rather difficult to believe—that it was Byron's first intention to call the boat *The Countess Guiccioli*, and that only the fear of compromising her and of annoying her father, caused the name to be altered.[20]

It was, according to Trelawny, at about this time that a modest request from a tenor called Sinclair, of the Pisa opera-house, that Byron and Shelley should each write a song for him, set both poets good-naturedly to work, putting words to an Indian air which Jane Williams had often played to them. The Hindustani words of the air, Trelawny affirms, which begin 'Allah Malla punca' [*sic*] 'are as hackneyed in Bengal as Malbrouk or Cherry-ripe in Covent Garden'.[21] The result of these poetic efforts were, he states, Shelley's exquisite lyric, 'I arise from dreams of thee',[22] and perhaps one of the worst, as well as the most absurd, of Byron's many bad poems, a lyric of which it is perhaps sufficient to quote the first verse:

> Oh my lonely—lonely—lonely pillow!
> Where is my lover, where is my lover?
> Is it his bark which my dreary dreams discover?
> Far far away! and alone among the billow.[23]

Trelawny adds that poor Teresa, when she attempted 'to marry the long verses of the English song to the allegro air—found it was impossible—notwithstanding which Byron maintained that the words corresponded excellently. The Contessa, when her patience and ingenuity (which were great) became exhausted, declared it was she who spoiled both the beautiful words (from not understanding them) and the music. The songs were not given to Sinclair—and Byron confessed his songs in general were not good and that he had great difficulty in composing them—yet, he added, you must all allow, the one I wrote to the Indian air is very good!'[24]

Poor Teresa! She tried very hard to play up to the mys-

terious new standards of the company in which she now found herself! Mary, she discovered, was having Greek lessons every day—and this appeared to constitute a further bond between her and Shelley. Perhaps, she thought, Byron would be pleased if she, too, showed an equal studiousness.

'I will leave you now,' she wrote to him half playfully and half in earnest, 'so as not to bore you—nor to lose time, *which should be given up entirely to the history of Hannibal.* But will you love me more when I know by heart the names of the river Trebbia, of Lake Trasimene, and of Cannae? If you will, my memory will accomplish miracles, and I will even accept the principles of T[aaff]e who says in a didactic tone "that a philosopher is superficial, if there is in his works a single mistake in date!" But let this remain between us, my treasure. Love me, for I adore you and forgive you.'[25]

It was at this time, too, that Teresa—perhaps influenced by Shelley's intense admiration for *Don Juan*—began to feel that she had been foolish about this poem and removed her ban on its completion, saying that 'she had only asked this sacrifice of him, to spare him further attacks, like those on the two earlier cantos, written *pendant les mauvais jours de Venice*'.[26] 'I obtained a permission from my Dictatress to continue it,' wrote Byron on July 8th, '*provided* always it was to be more guarded and decorous and sentimental in the continuation than in the commencement . . . The embargo was only taken off upon these stipulations.'[27]

On the following day, said Teresa, the sixth canto of *Don Juan* was begun. It was in this canto that Byron made use of the stories that Teresa had told him of her life at S. Chiara, where, during the Carnival, some of the girls dressed up in their brothers' clothes. 'The others followed them everywhere, and would dance only with them, which awakened great alarm among the nuns, so that this form of dressing-up was forbidden.'*

* This story, according to Teresa, suggested to Byron the idea of introducing Don Juan into the seraglio, and inspired the description of the other maidens' feelings towards the newcomer:

While Byron was working on these cantos, according to Teresa, 'His pen moved so rapidly over the page that one day I said to him, "One would almost believe that someone was dictating to you!" "Yes," he replied, "a mischievous spirit who sometimes even makes me write what I am not thinking. There now, for instance—I have just been writing something against love! Why don't you erase it, then?" I asked "It's written,' he replied, smiling, "the stanza would be spoiled" And the stanza remained [28]

Trelawny was equally struck with Byron's facility, and commented besides that in all the manuscripts he had seen in Pisa (*Don Juan Cain, Mazeppa* and the tragedies) there was scarcely a single correction or alteration The reason was that he had an extraordinarily retentive memory—he composed in his brain, during his morning walks and rides, and at night hastily wrote what he had composed during the day. I have often heard him muttering over and over his rhymes, and sometimes he repeated a stanza or two of Don Juan, which I have afterwards seen him set down on paper [29]

He had not, however, much patience with Trelawny's long stories 'He one day suddenly interrupted the description of a hurricane I was narrating and said abruptly, putting his hand on my horse's mane—"T, have you ever written a Book?" I answered no! "I am glad of that," he replied, 'for then it is possible we may be friends!"—I told him a

But certain tis they all felt for this new
Companion something newer still as twere
A sentimental friendship through and through,
Extremely pure, which made them all concur
In wishing her their sister save a few
Who wished they had a brother just like her

Don Juan, VI, XXXIX

Later on she told Lord Malmesbury that Byron 'wrote all the last cantos on playbills or on any odd piece of paper at hand and with repeated glasses of gin punch by his side He then used to rush out of his room to read her what he had written, making many alterations and laughing immoderately MALMESBURY, *Memoirs of an Ex Minister*, I, p 27

friend of mine wished his opinion of a MSS.—" He wants me to praise it!" he replied. " Tell him I have praised it.—But I won't peruse it—When they give me their MSS. I know what they want—praise—and they have it. I used to be fool enough to read them—I am wiser now." '[30]

All these activities of the little British colony in Pisa seem innocent enough. But to the Italian police, who from the first had kept an anxious and vigilant eye upon them, they bore a very different aspect. Like specialists in other fields, they saw the whole of life in terms of their own preoccupation, and having once firmly ticketed Byron and the Gambas as subversive Liberals, imagined them never to be engaged in any other pursuit! This naïve and sincere conviction, underlying all the police reports sent off from Pisa, gives them the same curious twist that distorted the similar reports about Byron in Bologna; to read them is like reading about busy termites, not about human beings.

When first the Gambas arrived in Pisa, as exiles from the Papal States, the Government of Tuscany granted them a permit to reside there for two months (which later on was extended, with some difficulty, to four) but at the same time ordered the local police to keep them under constant supervision. At first they reported that the Gamba family 'was behaving in a very reserved manner. The lady, who is very attractive, has only gone out a few times with her father'.[31] But a little later on they observed that Count Gamba's house was becoming a regular meeting-place for exiled Ravennati, whose ostensible position in the Count's household was only a cloak for their political activities.[32] The opening of the Pisa University, they feared, would also bring there some subversive students who had been exiled from Turin, and moreover the arrival was now expected of a certain Lord Byron, who had asked for a permit to bring all his furniture from Ravenna to Pisa, without paying the customary duties. So now a letter went off to the Buongoverno from the head of the Financial Department of Pisa:

'We are aware of certain rumours about the political atti-

tude of this Englishman, who combines with high birth, literary celebrity, and a considerable fortune, a great determination to favour *all political novelties.*' The writer, therefore, 'in view of the opening of the University', and a fear that Byron might become 'the Protector and Centre of all those young fanatics', suggested that 'the most careful and secret instructions should be sent for the supervision of the aforesaid foreigner.'[33]

For this purpose an admirable tool was available, in the person of the Cavaliere Luigi Torelli—an arch informer who had achieved such eminence in his profession that he corresponded directly with Metternich, and was known by the title of 'the spy of spies'.[34] A true fanatic in the cause of despotic government—to which he always referred as 'the good cause'—he kept a voluminous diary entitled 'Arcana politicae anticarbonariae', of which many pages, from the time when Byron's arrival was expected, were given up to the English Mylord. 'This famous poet, if he were not considered a madman, would deserve the supervision of the police of the whole Europe.' But, he added, Mylord's coming was still far from certain. He had taken the Palazzo Lanfranchi for a yearly rent of 200 zecchini and had paid six months in advance, 'but some people still wager that *questo stravagante* will change his mind and will not come.'[35] Byron, however, did arrive, with his whole great menagerie—and now once again, as at Bologna, the police were confronted with the problem of how to spy on him at once effectively and unobtrusively. 'The police of Pisa', says the report of 'the spy of spies', 'not knowing how to enter into contact with so noble a personage, limits itself to observing the Palazzo, to see who is entering it.'[36]

They stood about at the street corners—no doubt as conspicuous and unmistakable as plain-clothes policemen everywhere else—they chattered to Byron's servants, they opened, once again, his letters, and, since there was nothing to learn, they learned remarkably little. His works, however, were more easily accessible than his person, and, curiously enough, a translation of his *Prophecy of Dante* had got as far as

Volterra, to fall into the hands of the Commissioner of that small city. Its contents struck him as extremely dangerous: 'It is most decidedly not written in the spirit of our government, nor of any of the Italian governments. To me, indeed, it seems designed to augment popular agitation, which is already sufficiently aroused. Lord Byron makes Dante foresee democracy and independence, as the true *goods* of this country. . . .'[37]

It was ideas like these, the Commissioner stated, and even more those expressed 'by that Lady, whom her own English papers describe as a Fury' [Lady Morgan] which 'cause weak heads to become heated' and do all the more harm in the provinces, 'because of the ignorance of those in whose hands they fall'.[38]

To all this the Florentine Government replied in some perplexity that it would like to see a copy of this dangerous work (of which the circulation was meanwhile prohibited)—and within ten days the Commissioner forwarded it, quoting the far from complimentary comments of the translator: 'A thousand have said these things before Byron, but the present times make me consider them dangerous . . . The translator confesses that he found the poem difficult to digest, and adds that it was hard work to divest certain images of their prosaic garb. "The style of the greater part of living English poets is, in truth, so turgid and extravagant as to deform their ideas, even when they are magniloquent or acute." Why then take so much trouble to translate a bad poet? Probably because everything is good that serves a party purpose.'[39]

All this was absurd enough. But the suspicions of the Buongoverno were by now thoroughly awakened, and when Byron sent a message to the Governor of Pisa—Marchese Niccolò Viviani, the father of Shelley's Emilia—to ask whether he might indulge in pistol-practice in his own garden (it being forbidden to carry arms) the Governor felt bound to reply that he could permit nothing of the kind. The young Englishmen—it should perhaps be remembered that, of all this company, Byron alone was over thirty—were thus obliged

to ride out for their shooting to a farm outside the town, and would return home at sunset, laughing and shouting, their horses clattering down the narrow streets. And soon Torelli had a real piece of news to report:

'At last', he wrote triumphantly, 'Lord Byron and his company of assassins have given us a taste of the temper they have already shown elsewhere, as the Government has been expecting ever since their arrival in Pisa.'[40]

The incident to which he referred was what is known as the 'Masi affray'—trivial and absurd in itself, but far-reaching in its consequences. Briefly, on the evening of March 24th, Byron and his rowdy party in fancy-dress were riding home as usual, just outside the town, followed by Mary Shelley and Teresa in a carriage. A sergeant-major of the Italian Dragoons, called Masi who was in a hurry to enter the city, came galloping up and, since the road was almost completely obstructed by the English party, pushed his way through somewhat roughly, causing the horse of that uncertain rider, Mr. Taaffe, to shy violently while Taaffe, in fear and annoyance, called out to Byron, 'Did you ever see such a thing!' They caught Masi up, and, with their whips raised, accused him of insulting one of their friends; Masi replied with considerable heat; a crowd gathered; and finally Byron, under the erroneous impression that Masi was an officer, threw his visiting-card to him.* On reaching the city gates Masi, with the help of two old soldiers, attempted to arrest the Englishmen; they pushed past him; Pietro Gamba slashed at him with his whip, Masi drew his sword, Shelley got hit on the head and Captain Hay received a cut on the nose. After they had all taken refuge, with the two ladies, in the Palazzo Lanfranchi, Byron galloped back and resumed the altercation. As, however, a few minutes later, Masi rode past the palazzo, one of Byron's servants rushed out with a pitchfork (or pos-

* 'It is proper to add', wrote Byron to Mr. Dawkins, the British Minister in Florence, 'that I conceived the man to have been an officer, as he was well dressed, with scaled epaulettes, and not ill-mounted, and *not* a sergeant-major (the son of a washerwoman, it is said), as he turns out to be.' Masi was a veteran of the Napoleonic wars, who had served in Spain and Germany.

sibly only with a large toasting-fork—Teresa calls the instrument 'une petite fourche') severely wounded him in the abdomen, and rushed back into the palazzo, says Teresa, 'before he could be recognized'.[41] 'I saw Masi', wrote an eye-witness, 'tottering in the saddle, ride as far as Don Beppe's café, where, no longer able to sit his horse, his helmet fell off; his hair was standing on end, his face was as white as a sheet and he fell down exclaiming "I am killed!".'[42]

His wound was fortunately not fatal, but the story spread through the city, and lost nothing in the telling. The mad Englishmen, it was said, had placed themselves at the head of a peasant insurrection; Trelawny had been killed, and Byron seriously wounded. No, said another version, Taaffe had killed the dragoon and was now lying concealed in Palazzo Lanfranchi, guarded by Byron's bulldog. 'I am told', wrote Torelli, 'that Lord Byron has mounted two small pieces of field-artillery at the door of his room, and keeps a quantity of guns, pistols and daggers on the table. So that a hunchback carrier, who was sent from the Maremma with a small wild boar and a letter to Byron, was so alarmed at this warlike show, that he threw down the boar, gave the letter to a servant, and fled from Palazzo Lanfranchi without even waiting to be paid.'[43]

Feeling in the town ran high and when, on the day after the incident and in spite of Teresa's protests, Byron went out riding as usual, the Pisans murmured, 'Have those assassins been arrested, or are they still walking about the town?'[44] At the height of the trouble, the young student Guerrazzi saw a little scene that made upon him an indelible impression. 'I saw', he wrote, 'all the Englishmen who were then living in Pisa, whether they were friends of Byron's or not, going off with their arms to his palazzo, to defend their great national poet. And then I thought if he had been an Italian, the Italians would have united to stone him. And so I began to understand why the English are a great people.'[45]

Teresa, however, was frankly terrified. 'My Byron,' she

wrote, 'is it indeed necessary for you to go out again today, too? Others will tell you that the city is quiet; but what a difference there is between their friendship for you and the feelings that fills *my* whole heart! No one else will tell you that the most precious of all these lives is the one that is in the greatest danger: yours, my Byron'[46]

Byron continued to go for his daily rides, but he did send a careful account of the whole incident to the British Minister in Florence, Mr Dawkins,—first consulting Trelawny as to the correct way to address the letter, and asking 'if Dawkins was an Hon ble'

I said, 'A Monsieur, Monsieur Dawkins, Secretary of Legation." "No, no,' said Byron, "that won t do Dress and address is everything." He then concluded his letter with, honour to yr very humble obedient servant" and addressed it to His Excellency the Hon ble etc and smiling observed, With as little a net as this will I ensnare as great a fly as Cassio" [47]

Byron's letter to Dawkins stated that 'several British subjects have been insulted and some wounded, and stated that he had no wish 'to prevent or evade the fullest investigation of the business'[48] And indeed, three days after the brawl, a police Commissioner arrived from Florence, depositions were taken and Byron made use of the privilege of his rank to be examined, with Teresa, in his own house. Torelli says that the examining magistrate, Lapini, prepared himself for the formidable interview by reading the article on Byron in the French Biography of Famous Men, from which he learned that the poet descended from the Scottish kings, had murdered one of his mistresses, and habitually used her skull as a drinking-cup'. After this, 'he was quite astonished by the courteous and high-bred manner in which he was received by this enemy of the human race'.[49]

All his servants, too, were examined, but only two—a servant of the Gambas, Antonio Maluchielli, and Byron's *barbuto servo*, Tita Falcieri (who arrived in court for his examination armed with two pistols and a dagger), were kept

in prison for trial. According to Teresa, the culprit was undoubtedly one of Byron's coachmen, who had actually confessed his misdeed to his master. Byron had then held a council of war with his friends as to whether to help the man to escape to Lucca, and tell the police the truth. But in the end they decided to keep silence, and 'leave everything to the course of justice'. Teresa was much upset by all this, fearing that—as indeed occurred—suspicion would fall on the Gamba servants, and they would all be involved in the consequences. 'I can no longer keep silence,' she wrote to Byron, after a disagreement on the subject. 'Won't you at least take a decision about the coachman? Papa assures me that this uncertainty will be very dangerous for our family.'[50]

Papa was right. Tita Falcieri was acquitted and sent home —'which all proves', Torelli commented acidly, 'that guineas are common currency in all countries'—but Maluthielli was kept in prison for many months, and the whole incident was used as a pretext by the government for requesting the Gamba family to leave Pisa. Moreover, at much the same time as these events, fresh forces were being marshalled against them from another direction. At the beginning of the year Count Guiccioli, after having paid to his wife for six months the allowance ordered by the Pope, had sent her a most disquieting letter, in which he actually asked her to return to him. Teresa's answer was very clear, if not precisely tactful.

Pisa *February 25th*, 1822

I am grateful to you for your proposals, for I attribute them to the interest you still feel for me. Be assured that what I feel for you is not less; and the only reason that could induce me even to listen to such proposals would be my desire to contribute to your happiness—for as to my own, I think I have already attained it, and am enjoying it in my present situation. But is it indeed probable that our reunion would add to your welfare and not lessen mine? I, for my part, doubt it very much. On the contrary I am persuaded that no interview or agreement would ever be sufficient to obtain for

us an assurance of future mutual tranquillity. I must repeat to you that I am perfectly happy in my present situation and I think that no other would ever again suit me. When one has attained the tranquillity I now enjoy, at the cost of so many sacrifices and so much suffering, it is not easy to renounce it

Keep yourself as well and happy as I from my heart desire.
Your Wife TERESA GAMBA GUICCIOLI[51]

On receiving this unequivocal reply, Count Guiccioli decided to resort to action Why, he thought, should he continue to pay a regular allowance to a woman who not only had no intention of returning to him, but who manifestly had not kept her side of the bargain? He at once took counsel with his advocate in Rome, Vincenzo Taglioni, who replied that he considered the Count's case difficult –but I will not say, desperate I have diligently examined your letter and taken advice of it and I say frankly that you are in the right But it depends on proving to others that you are right as I believe you to be

For this purpose, the advocate continued, it would first be necessary to prove that the Gambas father and son, had been banished to Pisa, and that Teresa had gone there with them, that Byron was also living there, and that there was proof from public report of amorous intercourse'. With such proofs as these I am of opinion that we can be very hopeful . With all sincerity however I cannot conceal that the person whom I have consulted before entering into details, has mentioned the great expense you will incur You will know how to manage the business, as you are a man of the world [52]

Apparently, however, the Count considered that the expense (in other words, a bribe) was worth incurring, for very soon afterwards he sent to the Pope a long petition In this he pointed out that His Holiness's rescript permitted the Contessa Teresa Gamba to be separated from her husband and live with her father, Conte Ruggero Gamba, *ut ea laudabile ratione vivat, quae honestam nobilem mulierem a viro seni-*

unctam decet (that she may live the worthy life which becomes an honest and noble wife separated from her husband).'[53]

But, said the Count, Teresa's first step on leaving her husband's house 'was not to go to her father's house and stay there, but she went instead to a country-house near which also lived an English gentleman who was fond of the company of the said Teresa, and had her waited upon and served by his own servants.'

Moreover, he added, Teresa's father and brother were now living in Pisa, 'and in common with them live the aforesaid Contessa Teresa and the English gentleman. What sort of life the Contessa is leading in Pisa, and what the public opinion about her is, Your Holiness may easily learn at Your leisure, by asking the Archbishop of that city. . . .'

'On such evidence,' the Count concluded, 'it does not seem just that the petitioner should pay to such a wife the allowance promised to her in accordance with the provisional Rescript . . . But merely out of leniency towards her, the most that should be accorded to her, would be the interest on 3000 silver scudi, which is the portion of her dowry which I received, and still retain . . . It is repugnant not only to the Rescript but to every law, that a wife separated from her husband should be supported by him however and wherever her fancy and luck may take her.'[54]

Soon after this petition the Count, who had got a spy among Byron's servants,* from whom he received regular reports, was able to send the further news that, the Gamba family having been told to leave Pisa, Teresa was now actually living under the same roof with Byron, in a villa at Montenero, near Leghorn. And at last Guiccioli was successful: on July 11th the Pope, 'in order to dissuade the imprudent young woman from a life which, she boasted, made her happy', revoked his earlier Rescript and suspended Teresa's allowance.

The 'villeggiatura' at Montenero, where Byron and Teresa

* Elliot Papers. The spy was Gaetano Forestieri, Byron's cook. Two of his letters were forwarded by Guiccioli to Taglioni.

stayed from the end of May to the beginning of July, was not wholly agreeable. The Villa Dupuy—a large, square, 'flimsy-built villa' of a deep salmon colour,—'the hottest-looking house', in Leigh Hunt's opinion, that he had ever seen,—stood at the end of a long, dusty road in the suburbs of Leghorn. It had a fine garden, which Teresa described as containing simultaneously, in full bloom, roses and jasmin, heliotrope and tuberoses—and a great terrace from which Byron could see 'the islands of Elba and Corsica—and my old friend the Mediterranean rolling blue at my feet'.[55] Here Byron and Teresa spent their evenings, playing draughts (but Byron cheated) and watching the little fishing-boats in the bay—and, on June 17th, saw across the harbour, the flickering lights of the Pisa 'Luminara' in the distance.*

The summer, unfortunately, was an unusually hot one—another token, in Teresa's eyes of 'the evil fate conspiring against our peace'—and though they tried to counteract the glare in their hot rooms ('ten times hotter', wrote Trelawny, 'than the old solid palazzo he had left') by hanging damp green boughs against the window, and to refresh themselves by eating a succession of water-ices, the heat told heavily upon their health and spirits. Moreover in June the water-supply gave out, so that every drop, even for the most common domestic uses',[56] had to be fetched on muleback from a spring in the hills, over a mile away. This gave rise to a long and tedious law suit between Byron and the owner of the villa, Francesco Dupuy, in the course of which Byron characteristically refused to pay to his lawyers the security for costs required of all foreigners, but eventually allowed a Maltese shopkeeper of Leghorn to pay it for him. He also instructed Lega Zambelli to complain in writing that his opponent's advocate had referred to him as 'Signore' instead of using his proper title of 'Lord'. 'If the rank of my master', Zambelli wrote, 'is not stated in future documents,

* The Pisa 'Luminara', which took place every year on the feast of S Ranieri, consisted in an illumination, by little oil lamps, of all the chief churches and houses.

he intends to make a diplomatic protest, through his Minister.'[57]

As if these annoyances were not enough, Count Gamba, who had gone to Florence for the Masi trial, to try and free his servant Maluchielli, was constantly writing long, querulous letters about the tyranny of the Tuscan Government. As the trial dragged on, Gamba received an increasingly strong impression that the delays were deliberate, while the Government was looking for some pretext to aim, through his friends and their servants, at Byron himself. No further permits were granted to the Gambas, but they were told that they might go to Montenero 'provisionally, without any papers'.[58]

All this left Teresa in a state of constant apprehension, while Byron was both exasperated and bored. Moreover it is clear from Teresa's account that he was at this time sunk in one of his dark moods of melancholy. Only a month earlier, on April 22nd, the news had reached him of the sudden death of Allegra—and although now he never spoke of the child, he went on brooding over her loss—and, in spite of his asseverations to the contrary, not without some qualms of conscience.*

Teresa's account of the child's death in the 'Vie' adds little to what she told to Moore, but a number of letters to Lega Zambelli and Fletcher from Pellegrino Ghigi—Byron's banker at Ravenna, who had been left in charge of Allegra's expenses—show that several reports of her illness were sent to Pisa.[59] On April 13th, after she had already had several attacks of 'little slow fevers', Dr. Rasi—believing her to be suffering from a consumptive attack—ordered her to be bled three times. On the 15th she was considered to be out of danger, but, wrote Ghigi, 'I assure you that she has been very ill, of a dangerous illness'. He went to see her and found her 'in her little bed in a fine room', surrounded by three

* *L.J.*, VI, p. 54. April 23rd, 1822. 'I do not know that I have anything to reproach in my conduct,' he told Shelley, 'and certainly nothing in my feelings and intentions towards the dead. But it is a moment when we are apt to think that, if this or that had been done, such event might have been prevented.'

doctors and by all the nuns, asking for 'some tender cheese'. 'If there is any fault, it is of too much care.'

Byron, according to Teresa, was 'very much agitated' by this account and at once sent off a courier to Bagnacavallo, asking for more details and telling the nuns to call in Professor Tommasini of Bologna, if necessary But it plainly never occurred, either to him or to Teresa, to go to the child themselves—and on the 20th Ghigi was sending Lega Zambelli the news of her death,—'after a convulsive catarrhal attack'. 'I am so upset , he added, by this misfortune that I wish I had never met the Noble Lord

At Bagnacavallo, where the nuns had made much of 'Allegrina', the strange, pretty child who had come to them from the great world of fashion and sin, a tradition lingered that on August 10th—four months too late -Byron had come to visit the convent under an assumed name

I remember', said an old woman who had lived nearby as a child, 'that one day we heard loud cries from the convent, and people said it was Mylord lamenting the child s death and reproaching the Sisters, because they had not told him of her illness I myself saw the poor gentleman I thought him a good-looking man, with curly hair and blue eyes I noticed that he could not walk very well [60]

This story appears to be completely apocryphal Far from going to Bagnacavallo himself, Byron even refused to receive the two messengers (one of them a priest) who had brought poor little Allegra's embalmed body to Leghorn, and who had made the journey in order to be able to give him a full account of her illness They returned to Bagnacavallo 'greatly mortified, and I too , wrote Ghigi, blush to think that one day (for now it is being concealed) it will be known that they were refused admittance I am prepared to believe that Mylord is very sensitive and deeply grieved, but I also recognize that every man has his own self-respect . . and sorrow must not make one forget one s manners towards others'.[61]

The good nuns of Bagnacavallo—one of whom took to her bed with grief after Allegra's death—made a little statue of

her, 'to preserve the memory of a most lovable child', and dressed it in her own clothes—'a chemise, a silken dress, a little fur tippit and a chain of gold round her neck'.[62] She had died, they said, because she was 'too intelligent to live'; never had they had so gifted and promising a pupil. A fragment of Byron's Peer's robe, sent by him to the convent to be made up into a frock for his daughter, was afterwards used as a cope for one of the Canons. And Allegra's little waxen statue of the Madonna—dressed in puce-coloured silk, with gold braid and a golden crown—was given by the nuns to another of their little pupils, called Elettra Malagola, who treasured it until her death and bequeathed it to her daughter.[63] It was saved from the ruins of their bombed house during the war, and is now in my possession—probably the last tangible link with Allegrina.

It is, of course, possible to make a sweeping condemnation of Byron's attitude to Allegra—to accuse him of heartlessness and indifference. But perhaps the truth was not so simple. The references to the child in his letters and Teresa's, and especially the frequent ones in the 'Vie', as well as Byron's correspondence about her with Scott and Hoppner, show a complete masculine unawareness of a small child's character or needs—but not deliberate neglect, still less indifference. In this, as in many other human relationships, his cynicism and indifference were a form of bravado; he felt, as Moore had perceived, 'more naturally than he will allow'.[64] He was a man capable of both cruelty and real kindness; he was cruel in cold blood, or if stirred to the self-defensive sadism which hysterical appeals from women awoke in him; but more often,—and this is a trait as to which, in particular, all his Italian observers have agreed—he could be kind, with a quick, warm generosity. With Allegra, as with everyone else, he was an egotist; but many an egotist has loved his children dearly, as projections of himself. The trouble was that Allegra was a most disconcerting little mirror. If sometimes she pleased him by seeming 'a true Byron', she had also all the traits which Byron most disliked in himself: the tendency to mockery and malice, the violent temper, the wilfulness. 'Ob-

stinate as a mule and ravenous as a vulture, who thinks herself handsome, and will do as she pleases.'[65] A spoiled man and a spoiled child—or rather a man and a child who had been both over and under indulged—could hardly be expected to live happily in the same house. Byron petted the child as long as she was amiable, sent her to scream and kick upstairs with the maids, as soon as she was not—or, above all, as soon as she reminded him of Claire[66]—and, in the end, packed her off to her convent-school, in a genuine belief that she would receive a wiser upbringing there than under the erratic care of the Shelleys, or exposed to the hysterical affection of her mother

Moreover, in the queer mixture of his feelings for Allegra—bravado, affection, impatience, guilt—there was also a feeling of resentment (unjust, but not wholly unnatural), on behalf of that other child of his, whom he could never see. Allegra, the little bastard, drove in his carriage and sat on his knee, but it was Ada's birthday that he noted in his journal, Ada's miniature that stood on his writing desk, Ada's education, her disposition and her future, that were always on his lips It needed Allegra's death for her to find a place in the world of his imagination, so much more real to him than the actual one, only then did she acquire for him—for a short time—the reality that she had lacked when she was alive. This, I fancy, is what Byron meant when he said to Lady Blessington that his imagination, like that of all poets, was warmer than his heart

'We are always so much more occupied by the ideal than the present, that we forget all that is actual But', he added, 'let the object of affection be snatched away by death, and how is all the pain ever inflicted on them avenged! The same imagination that led us to slight or overlook their sufferings, now that they are forever lost to us, magnifies their estimable qualities . . How did I feel this when my daughter, Allegra, died! While she lived, her existence never seemed necessary to my happiness; but no sooner did I lose her, than it appeared to me as if I could not live without her'[67]

He shut himself away from Teresa, brooding on all this,

and letting his thoughts drift back from Allegra's unhappy childhood to his own, and to his days at Harrow. He wrote to Murray to tell him that he had had the child's body embalmed, and was sending it ('in what ship I know not'—but Teresa was seeing to the details) to be buried under the large elm tree 'where I used to sit for hours and hours when a boy'.[68] And then his thoughts went back again to Teresa,—sitting downstairs at that moment, in the darkened drawing-room in the heat, waiting for him. What would he feel, he wondered, if *she* died?

'How much more severely would the death of Teresa afflict me with the dreadful consciousness that while I had been soaring into the fields of romance and fancy, I had left her to weep over my coldness or infidelities of imagination! . . . It is a dreadful proof', he added sententiously, 'of the weakness of our natures, that we cannot control ourselves sufficiently to form the happiness of those we love, or to bear their loss without agony.'[69]

But still he did not go downstairs, to join her.

It was during this unhappy time that he received a short visit from 'his earliest and best friend', Lord Clare. 'As I have always loved him better than any (*male*) thing in the world, I need hardly say what a melancholy pleasure it was to see him for a *day* only.'[70] Of all the men who called themselves Byron's friends, Clare was the only one whose friendship he himself never denied. 'As to friendship, it is a propensity in which my genius is very limited. I do not know the *male* human being, except Lord Clare . . . for whom I feel anything that deserves the name. All my others are men-of-the-world friendships. I did not even feel it for Shelley, however much I admired and esteemed him . . . I have had, and may have still, a thousand friends, as they are called, in *life*, who are like one's partners in the waltz of this world—not much remembered when the ball is over.'[71]

On this occasion, according to Teresa, his parting with Clare was clouded not only by sadness, but by a heavy sense of foreboding. '"I have a presentiment that I shall not see

him again," he said, and his eyes filled with tears. I saw the same melancholy come over him during the first weeks after Lord Clare's departure, whenever the conversation turned upon his friend.'[72]

His melancholy was temporarily dispelled by a flattering incident, at a party given for him by the officers of the American Squadron, which had just arrived in Leghorn. 'As I was going away, an American Lady took a rose from me (which had been given to me by a very pretty Italian lady that very morning) because, she said, "she was determined to take something which I had about me, to America" . . . I would rather', he added, 'have a nod from an American, than a snuff-box from an emperor.'[73]

At Montenero, too, an occasional American tribute came to break the monotony of the long, hot days. A young scholar, Mr Bancroft, came to call and was presented with a copy of *Don Juan*; and for several days Byron and Teresa sat for their portraits to an American artist Edward West. On the first day Byron was silent, 'assuming a countenance as though he were thinking of a frontispiece for *Childe Harold'*, but later on, giving way to the 'incontinence of speech' which Lady Blessington considered his besetting sin, he regaled his visitor with 'the whole history of his connection with the Countess, and said he hoped it would last for ever'. West, plainly an impressionable young man, was greatly struck by his first glimpse of Teresa.

'While I was painting, I heard a voice exclaim "E' troppo bello!" I turned, and discovered a beautiful female stooping down to look in. Her long golden hair hung about her face and shoulders; her complexion was exquisite, and her smile completed one of the most romantic-looking heads I had ever beheld.'

Before leaving, however, West told Byron that, in his opinion, he was not a happy man. 'He inquired earnestly what reason I had for thinking so; and I asked him if he had never observed in little children after a paroxysm of grief, that they had at intervals a convulsive or tremulous manner

of drawing in a long breath. Wherever I had observed this in persons of whatever age, I had always found that it came from sorrow.'[74]

But the American fleet sailed away, and Mr. West packed up his easel—and Byron and Teresa (except for an occasional brief visit from Pietro Gamba) were once again thrown upon their own resources. To Lady Blessington, only a few weeks later, he expressed the theory that such a *tête-à-tête* was the happiest of all forms of existence. 'We are all better in solitude . . . I do not mean the solitude of country neighbourhoods; where people pass their time *à dire, redire et médire.* No! I mean a regular retirement with a woman that one loves, and interrupted only by a correspondence with a man that one esteems.'[75]

But when, in actual fact, he found himself leading such an existence, his spirits sank extremely low. It was not only that he was sometimes bored by Teresa - and certainly not that he had ceased to feel affection for her. On the contrary, all the evidence points to his having shown her—except in waves of moodiness or exasperation—a more simple kindliness than ever before Medwin has described them sitting together (a few weeks later), in the shade of the orange trees of Palazzo Lanfranchi, while he called her his *piccinina*[76]—and even Hunt, the least well-disposed of all their observers, was forced to admit that he had seen Teresa 'both smile very sweetly, and look very intelligently, when Lord Byron had said something kind to her'.[77] Now, as in the early days at La Mira, her chief charm for him was her warm-hearted naturalness. 'I feel with an Italian woman as if she was a full-grown child, possessing the buoyancy and playfulness of infancy with the deep feelings of womanhood.'[78]

But a full-grown child, with the feelings of a woman, is an exacting companion; and Byron was now, very often, too tired to respond. 'The truth is, my habits are not those requisite to form the happiness of any woman. I am worn out in feelings, for, though thirty-six, I feel sixty in mind, and am less capable than ever of those nameless attentions that all women, but, above all, Italian women, require.'[79]

He could not, simply could not, keep up the eternal stream of tenderness, of endearments, of little kindnesses which, Teresa said, 'made the world a Paradise for me'. He was distrait and gloomy' at meals, he forgot to bring her any flowers, he shut himself up for longer and longer hours in his study—and came out, to find her in tears We witness, without the power of alleviating, the anxiety and dissatisfaction our conduct occasions. We are not so totally unfeeling as not to be grieved at the unhappiness we cause, but this same power of imagination transports our thoughts to other scenes'[80]

The scene to which they were now transported was, once again, South America He sent a letter to Edward Ellice, asking for information about the opportunities there ('is it true that for a few thousand dollars a large tract of land may be obtained?'),[81] and with the members of his household he discussed the subject so freely that Guiccioli wrote to his lawyer to inform him that Byron was sailing to America in the *Bolivar*.[82]

Teresa, who loyally ascribed this new plan to 'a profound disgust in Byron's loyal and noble soul at the lack of freedom in Europe, took it for granted that she and her brother would both go with him 'Neither of them would have hesitated to cross the Atlantic'.[83] But nothing in Byron's letters suggests that he had any such intention

'I had, and still have, thoughts of South America,' he wrote some weeks later to Moore, 'but am fluctuating between it and Greece I should have gone, long ago, to one of them, but for my liaison with Countess G. *She* would be delighted to go too, but I do not choose to expose her to a long voyage, and a residence in an unsettled country'[84]

Yet it was becoming increasingly evident that the Gamba family, at least, would have to go somewhere—since they would not be allowed to stay on in Tuscany By the end of June Count Ruggero and Pietro had also arrived at Montenero, after an unsatisfactory conclusion of the Masi trial and the banishment, in spite of his innocence, of their servant Maluchielli. But they still had no permit to reside at Monte-

nero. Their servants quarrelled unceasingly with Byron's, and the cook, Gaetano Forestieri, who was in Guiccioli's pay, wrote to him to complain that Count Pietro and his sister made themselves so much the masters in the house of Mylord, that there is no living there . . . Every day', he added, 'something new happens.'[85]

The most recent incident—one to which Torelli refers as 'a scene of the sort that Byron has stirred up in every place where he has been'[86]—was started by a Romagnole servant of Byron's, Papi, who, having been sent to fetch water from the spring, suddenly refused to do so, and 'began declaiming', says Teresa, 'against the rich and the aristocracy, and speaking of equality and fratenity'.[87] The other servants crowded round, crying and shouting; Pietro came out to see what all the noise was about, and gave some peremptory orders; Papi drew his knife and appears to have grazed Pietro's arm; he pulled out his pistol; Byron, from the balcony, threatened to fire upon the whole pack—and at last the police was sent for, to re-establish order. Long before their arrival, however, the scene was over. The chief culprit, according to Teresa, 'was walking up and down by the front door, alternatively sobbing and swearing',- and it was precisely at this moment that a new and malicious British observer arrived upon the scene. Leigh Hunt, after long delays and a most trying journey, already disposed to consider every Italian a scoundrel and to wonder whether he was wise to have brought his Marianne and their brood to such a country, observed with a startled eye the reconciliation scene: Teresa 'flushed, her eyes lit up and her hair streaming as if in disorder'—Pietro with his arm in a sling—the culprit (of 'a most sinister aspect, and meagre—a proper caitiff') imploring Byron's forgiveness and receiving his hand to kiss—and finally, later on, Shelley presenting the man with some money 'out of his very disgust; for he thought nobody would help such a fellow if he did not'[88]

The whole absurd incident gave the Government the pretext they had been waiting for. Byron's courier and Gamba's valet were immediately exiled, and the Gambas were warned

that unless they left the country within three days, a final sentence of banishment would be passed on them. Whereupon Byron at once wrote to the Governor of Leghorn that he preferred to leave the State himself, in their company. 'I will not remain any longer in a place where my friends are persecuted, and a refuge is denied to the unfortunate.'[89] He asked, however, for a short delay, so that he might first settle his affairs, and meanwhile the whole party returned to Pisa.

Here tragedy awaited them At midnight on July 13th Teresa, who was standing on her balcony in Palazzo Lanfranchi with her maid, looking out at the moonlight on the Lungarno, saw a carriage come hurrying up to the door. The maid called: 'Who is it'— Me—Mary Shelley—pray open at once' Teresa hurried down Mary, 'as white as marble, stood in the doorway Where is he? Sapete alcuna cosa di Shelley?' But they knew nothing—and poor Mary and Jane Williams got into their carriage again, and drove on through the night to Leghorn It was only after another five days of torturing uncertainty, when the two bodies were at last washed up upon the shore, that they were certain of the truth!

The rest of the tragedy, up to the final burning of the bodies on the Tuscan shore, is too well known, and too indirectly connected with this story, to be repeated here. But certainly Shelley's death, which so deeply changed the lives of all the members of that little community, affected Byron and Teresa no less than the rest. 'The fine spirit that had animated and held them together, was gone

The rest of Byron's stay in Pisa—nearly three months, until on September 28th they set off for Genoa—was a time of waiting and indecision The Gambas, father and son, had been obliged to leave Pisa at once, and were staying in Lucca,

* 'Do you know anything about poor Shelley', wrote Pietro Gamba to Teresa from Lucca on July 17th I cannot think of him without horror—and have almost lost hope But who is looking after those poor women? I am afraid of their doing something desperate, and hope they are not being left alone'

where Byron and Teresa intended to join them. But Pietro, who had made a trip to Lucca earlier in the spring, to find out whether their presence would be welcome there, had then reported that the official he had seen had been 'prodigal of courtesies and politenesses as of the Holy Water of the Madonna—but nothing more', and that 'Byron was much feared, as a gentleman of great merit, but too *warm*'.[90]

Byron therefore now requested the British Minister, Dawkins, to find out whether the Government of Lucca would allow the Gambas to reside there permanently, and Byron as well—since 'Lord Byron is determined not to abandon a family to whom he has been attached for a long period'.[91]

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lucca, Marchese Mansi, passed on the request to Queen Marie Louise with the comment: 'I have no intelligence as to the motives which have led the governments of Rome and Florence to exile the Count Gamba. All I know is that Lord Byron pays his court to Countess Guiccioli, daughter of Count Gamba, and that the said Lord is as much renowned for his poetic talents and literary culture as for his pernicious principles.'[92]

A further report sent to Marie Louise, a few days later, respectfully submitted that 'even if it should be decided to tolerate the presence of the Counts Gamba, the same would not be possible in the case of Baylon' [*sic*] owing to 'the fiery nature, great talents and financial resources' of the latter, and suggested that if it was desired to promote Mylord's departure, the simplest method would be 'to order the aforesaid Countess to seek a residence in another State'.[93]

For meanwhile Teresa—her father and brother having left—had moved into Palazzo Lanfranchi, a step which caused her relations some anxiety. 'I told you yesterday', wrote Pietro from Lucca, 'that your stay in casa Lanfranchi may be used as a weapon by the "guileful patrician"* [Guiccioli] and I still think so, especially if you were to remain there for some time without us. Take Mylord's advice . . . and decide something, but quickly.'[94]

* The reference is to Monti's 'Mascheroniana' in which he calls Guiccioli 'quel sottile ravegnan patrizio—sì di frodi perito. . . '

At the same time Torelli's diary was irritably deploring that 'owing to the imbecility of the Governor . . . Madame Guiccioli still remains in Pisa, and Byron, too, shows no sign of leaving. On the contrary, he is expecting a certain Smith, another English Poet, who has arranged to write with him and with that other Englishman who likes to call himself an Atheist on his passport [Shelley] a paper about the Italian Governments, which will be printed in England, in order to make his fortune.'[95]

The 'certain Smith'—whose arrival had indeed already taken place on that inauspicious day at Montenero—was Leigh Hunt, who, with his Marianne and their brood of six, was now firmly established on the ground floor of Palazzo Lanfranchi. They did not like it; they did not like Teresa; and Teresa did not like them. It was, indeed, hardly to have been expected. Mrs. Hunt—one of the most uncompromisingly British matrons who has ever set foot upon the Continent—was as intransigent in her middle-class independence as in her moral outlook. Everything about the life in Palazzo Lanfranchi was to her not only unfamiliar, but distasteful—and she did not hesitate to show it. Perhaps, indeed, if Teresa had been extremely cordial to her, if she had petted and praised the Hunts' dirty, ill-mannered and precocious children, Marianne might have been mollified. But Teresa and Byron did nothing of the kind. Teresa, who still knew very little English (while Marianne 'knew nothing of Italian, and did not care to learn it')[96] saw no reason for cultivating the acquaintance of this prolific, dowdy, middle-class Englishwoman, who pinched her lips in disapproval whenever they met. After a first formal introduction, she never set foot in the Hunts' apartment. And Byron's welcome, too, can hardly be described as cordial. 'Lord B.'s reception of Mrs H. was—as S[helley] tells me—most shameful. She came into his house sick and exhausted, and he scarcely deigned to notice her, was silent, and scarcely bowed.'[97] Later on he did, apparently, make some attempts at friendly intercourse, but the tartness of Marianne's retorts (which her husband took for wit) 'reduced him to silence', while the eldest boy's glib self-assurance

pleased him as little as the second one's untimely frankness.[98] They were all, he complained, 'dirtier and more mischievous than Yahoos. What they can't destroy with their filth they will with their fingers'.[99] The Hunts' attitude to such matters was less fussy. 'Can anything be more absurd,' wrote Marianne in her Diary, 'than a peer of the realm and a *poet* making such a fuss about three or four children disfiguring the walls of a few rooms. The very children would blush for him--fye, Lord B.—fye!'[100]

'Hunt's theory and practice', wrote Trelawny, 'were that children should be unrestrained until they were of an age to be reasoned with'—and consequently their shouts and yells, as well as the litter of their toys, took complete possession of the hall and marble staircase of the palazzo. But at that point their kingdom ended, for Byron trained his bulldog Moretto to stand growling at the top of the stairs. 'Don't let any Cockneys pass this way!'[101]

Before Hunt's arrival Byron had observed to Trelawny, 'You will find Leigh Hunt a gentleman in dress and address; at least he was so when I last saw him in England, with a taint of Cockneyism.'[102] But perhaps in Italy the Cockneyism became more marked, for it was not long before Byron was writing to Murray:

'As to any community of feeling, thought or opinion between Leigh Hunt and me, there is little or none . . . I do not know what world he has lived in, but I have lived in three or four; and none of them like his Keats and Kangaroo *terra incognita*. Alas! Poor Shelley! how we would have laughed had he lived, and how we used to laugh now and then, at various things, which are grave in the Suburbs!'[103]

Nevertheless, so long as they were all together at Palazzo Lanfranchi, Byron did sometimes try to be friendly. In the mornings he would come down into the garden singing, and would call 'Leontius' at the window of Hunt's study. Teresa, 'with her sleek tresses', would sit with them under the orange trees, and smile good-naturedly at Hunt's literary Italian. (But in the 'Vie' she wrote that it was hardly

intelligible, and that she had the greatest difficulty in not laughing in his face.) Byron would imitate Dr. Johnson 'Why, sir,"' in a high mouthing way, there was always some joking going forward. And yet, says Hunt, 'it was not pleasant, it was not cordial. There was a sense of mistake on both sides'.[104]

The truth was that neither Hunt nor Byron was able for a moment to forget that the poorer poet—since Shelley's death—was wholly dependent upon the richer one. Hunt had come to Italy, at Shelley's bidding, to edit the new joint periodical, *The Liberal* full of the highest hopes 'We will divide the world between us, like the Triumvirate' But Shelley died, *The Liberal*[105] from the first number, was a failure—and there, in Pisa, were the Leigh Hunts, completely on Byron's hands. 'I was thrown, after Shelley's death, *per force* on Lord Byron for his assistance, he even offered it; and bitter indeed, for the first time in my life, was the taste I then had of obligation.'[106]

Both Hunt and Marianne attempted to save their pride by the simple method of disavowing any gratitude They did not feel grateful, they pointed out, for the apartment which Byron had put at their disposal, because the ground floor was the servants' floor, and, in any case he himself did not make use of it,[107] they were not grateful for the furniture (which had been chosen by Shelley) because it was cheap[108] Both of them were constantly on the lookout for any slight, real or imaginary. 'In England [Byron] never ventured upon a raillery In Italy he soon began to treat me with it, and I was obliged, for both our sakes, to tell him I did not like it'[109] If Byron was silent Hunt accused him of ill-temper; if loquacious he commented acidly that 'everybody was not prepared, like the Captain [Medwin] to be thankful for stories of the noble Lord and all his acquaintances'[110]

'If Lord Byron appeared to be in good spirits', wrote Teresa in the 'Vie', 'Hunt called him heartless, if he took a bath, a sybarite If he tried to joke with him, he was guilty of the insufferable liberties that a great nobleman will allow

himself with a poor man. If he presented Hunt with numerous copyrights, with the sole intention of helping him, it could only be because he lacked an editor. If he was charitable, it was out of ostentation. If he was adored by the lady who regarded him as superior to the rest of humanity, it was because she had the soul of a slave and a mediocre intelligence. And finally, when he sacrificed all that he cared for, to serve the Greek cause, it was because he was tired of the sentimentality of Mme Guiccioli.'[111]

Any last hope of friendly relations between the two families was destroyed when Hunt discovered in what a tone Byron had been writing about him and his family, to friends in England. 'I had scarcely put up under the same roof with his lordship, than our "host", if he can be so called, commenced his claims upon our delicacy by writing disagreeable letters about us to his friends.'

The nature of Byron's comments was revealed by Theodore Hook in his review of the first number of *The Liberal*: '"Hunt is a bore, he is," says his Lordship, "a proser; Mrs. Hunt is no great things, and their six children perfectly intractable."'[112] To all this Hunt—when the time came—did not fail to retaliate. Lord Byron's mistress, he said, was nothing but 'a kind of buxom parlour-boarder, compressing herself artificially into dignity and elegance, and fancying she walked, in the eyes of the whole world, a heroine by the side of a poet',[113] and her feelings for Byron were alloyed by 'a good deal of the self-love natural to a flattered beauty'.[114] Moreover he described at length not only the light and coarse way in which he [Byron] would speak about her, but Teresa's own querulous jealousy and complaints. 'There was no real love', he concluded, 'on either side.'[115]

Teresa, for her part, described Hunt in the 'Vie', as 'cette sombre figure de l'ingrat et du calomniateur',—and added that after looking at 'his low forehead his sinister expression and the vulgarity of his whole person', she remarked to Byron that she was now inclined to believe in the 'humiliating theory' of our descent from animals.[116] As to

her alleged complaints, she observed with some verisimilitude that if she had ever wished to indulge in any, she would hardly have chosen Hunt as her confidant—and that in any case they had no more than a few words of any language in common. 'Tout cela', she sums up in the fly-leaf of her copy of Hunt's book 'est un chef d'œuvre de méchanceté, qui n'a d'égal que dans l'énormité du mensonge.'

For nearly three months this inharmonious party lived together at Palazzo Lanfranchi, with all their tempers growing thinner During the first weeks Byron went on hoping that the Gambas might be allowed to return to Pisa, or even to Ravenna; then, as that hope failed, and it became evident that their prolonged residence in Lucca—which, besides, was full of English people—would be equally unwelcome, he took the advice of Mr Hill, the British Minister in Genoa, and decided to go there.

Byron's last visitor in Pisa—his *alter ego*, Hobhouse—arrived shortly before their departure. His arrival was, for Byron, the happiest event for many months.

'We were sitting one evening in the garden of Palazzo Lanfranchi,' records Teresa. 'A soft melancholy was spread over his [Byron's] countenance; he recalled to mind the events of his life, and compared them with his present situation, and with that which it might have been if his affection for me had not caused him to remain in Italy, saying things which would have made this earth a paradise for me, if I had not already been tormented by the possibility of losing so much happiness. At that moment a servant announced Mr. Hobhouse. The slight shade of melancholy on Lord Byron's face gave instant place to the liveliest joy, but it was so great, that it almost deprived him of his strength A fearful paleness came over his cheeks, and his eyes were filled with tears, as he embraced his friend. His emotion was so great that he was forced to sit down.'[117]

Hobhouse's own account is considerably dryer. He observed that Byron was 'much changed—his face fatter, and the expression of it injured',[118] and remarked that they were

both at first 'a little formal'. Moreover, he maintained an attitude of supercilious detachment and disapproval towards every aspect of Byron's life in Italy. The Ravenna insurrection, in his record, appears as little more than one of the caprices that kept Byron busy and amused, although in an unworthy cause. 'The Romagnoles are a testy and shabby people.'[119] And his relationship with Teresa was treated with little more respect. 'It seems Madame Guiccioli and her father and brother lived together in a house apart until the Gambas went to prepare Lord Byron's house at Genoa. This is Italian morality.'[120] Byron retorted by repeating to Hobhouse a remark of Tom Moore's: 'Hobhouse is praised by everybody, but he is a companion I would sooner praise than live with.'[121]

Nevertheless, when the moment for parting came, both friends were moved. 'Hobhouse', said Byron, 'you should never have come, or you should never go.' Teresa gave Hobhouse some letters of introduction in Florence and, after his departure, sent him another to her aunt, Marchesa Sacrati, in Rome, with a letter which shows how anxious she was to be on good terms with him.

'Mylord, after having suffered from his rheumatism for two days, is now much relieved by a cure suggested by Vaccà,* to whom he has subjected himself with a docility so unlike him on similar occasions, that I do not know to what to attribute it, except to your wise advice. And this effect is so great a comfort to me, that I shall not be able to help wishing for your presence, to keep him in such a good frame of mind, like a good genius—even if I were not already moved to wish it by your unusual qualities, and by the pleasure of seeing Byron happier.'[122]

* Andrea Vaccà Berlinghieri (1772-1826), a celebrated doctor and surgeon of Pisa. A great friend of the Gambas, he also attended Byron and—after her arrival in Pisa—Mrs. Hunt, whom he declared to be dangerously ill and consumptive (she survived him, however, by thirty-six years). Hunt, in spite of his invincible prejudice against all Italians, was obliged to admit that he had 'a pleasing intelligent face, and was the most gentlemanlike Italian I ever saw'. (*Autobiography*, III, pp. 12-13.)

A few days later, on September 28th, the whole Pisa party —Byron and Teresa by land, and Trelawny with the Hunts by sea—set off for Genoa. For the last time, Byron's name is recorded in Torelli's diary. 'Mylord has at length decided to leave for Genoa. It is said that he is already tired of his new favourite, the Guiccioli. He has expressed his intention of not remaining in Genoa, but of going on to Athens to purchase adoration from the Greeks.'[120]

8 : CASA SALUZZO

Regain'd my freedom with a sigh.
The Prisoner of Chillon.

The journey to Genoa was not a pleasant one. It might have been expected, after so much friction at Pisa, that Byron, and still more Teresa, would have been only too glad to leave the Hunts behind them. But Byron was still committed to *The Liberal*; the Hunts had no other means of support; and so he wryly made the best of taking the whole 'kraal' with him. 'The death of Shelley left them totally aground; and I could not see them in such a state without using the common feelings of humanity, and what means were in my power, to set them afloat again.'[1]

The preparations for the journey took place in the poet's usual manner. 'If the Palazzo Lanfranchi had been on fire at midnight', wrote Trelawny, 'it could not have been worse.'[2] 'Not only did Byron wish to travel patriarchially,' explained Teresa, 'without leaving his menagerie behind, but he also wished to provide generously for the furnishing of the second house he had taken at Albaro, for the Hunts. The arrangements for the transportation of all these effects across rivers and mountains, over bad roads, and with all the complicated customs regulations then in force, required a great deal of time and patience.'[3]

Byron's menagerie, moreover, on this occasion included three large geese—since he feared he would not be able to procure any on his travels, and insisted on eating one on Michaelmas day, 'otherwise the year would be fatal'. They swung in a cage behind his carriage, punctuating the journey with their cackling. But when the time came to wring their necks, he would not give the order, and decided instead to keep them, 'to test the theory of their longevity'. 'On arriving in Genoa, they at once became the guardians and

mistresses of the yard, as sacred as those of the Capitol', and waddled about in the garden and the lower floor of the house, accompanying Byron wherever he went. 'Plus d'une fois il est entré chez Madame Guiccioli, précédé par ces reconnaissants volatiles.'[4]

The 'caravan', geese and all, halted for a few days at Lucca, where Ruggero and Pietro Gamba were waiting them, and Byron and Teresa were both invited to a gala evening at the theatre. This Byron declined, presumably from his usual morbid dread of encountering English acquaintances, and Teresa followed his example. 'She had lost', she comments rather sadly, 'all the tastes of her youth and of her country.'[5]

The road over the Apennines was so bad that it was decided to go to Lerici for one night and to proceed from there by sea to Sestri. At Lerici they were joined again by all the Hunts and Trelawny, who had come by sea in the *Bolivar*, and Byron was unfortunately moved to try a swimming-match with the Pirate. 'We were to swim to the Yacht, dine in the sea alongside of her, treading water the while, and then return to the shore.'[6] The programme was carried out—the dinner including a bottle of ale—and was not unnaturally followed, for Byron, by a violent chill and bilious attack, which kept him in bed for four days 'in the worst inn's worst room', dosing himself out of Thomas's *Domestic Medicine*. 'How do you feel?' inquired Trelawny. 'Feel! why, just as that damned obstreperous fellow felt chained to a rock, the vultures gnawing my midriff, and my vitals, too.'[7]

At last, however, the whole party was able to proceed—by sea, as far as Sestri, and in three boats—one for Byron and Teresa, one for Trelawny, and a third for Hunt and his family. 'It was pretty', wrote Hunt, 'to see the boats with their white sails, gliding by the rocks over that blue sea'—and Byron, in one of his sudden gusts of high spirits, 'ate the Sailor's cold fish and drank a Gallon of country wine'.[8] But poor Mrs. Hunt, who, after her voyage from England, had hoped 'never to see the sea again as long as I live', was not so happy, and was overcome with terror when, on landing at Sestri, 'a dozen odiously dirty men with beards unshaven

and long shaggy hair, up to the middle in water, began fighting for me and Mr. H. to carry us through the water. What lovely sea-nymphs!'[9]

Late that same night, Byron and Teresa arrived in Genoa. The villa that Pietro had taken for them was at Albaro, on a hill outside the town, and had a fine view of the harbour. It was large enough to contain two entirely separate apartments —as Teresa is again careful to emphasize—one for the Gamba family, and one for Byron himself, while the Villa Negrotto, which the Hunts were to share with Mary Shelley, was some little distance down the hill.

Any pleasure that Teresa might have felt over her new abode was destroyed, she says, by the sense that it was only provisional, and also by the imminent arrival of the Hunts. He, 'with his six little blackguards', was still crossing the Apennines, which he described as 'great doughy billows, like so much pudding or petrified mud', while Marianne performed most of the journey with her eyes shut, 'as the carriage went within a yard or not so much of some frightful precipice'.[10] On their arrival, they were not entirely pleased with their new residence; for although Hunt enjoyed writing about 'the marble steps to the staircase and a marble terrace over the portico', and observed that 'it would be fit for a nobleman in England', Marianne considered that 'the number and size of the doors and windows made it look anything but *snug*'.[11] She was feeling very ill, poor woman, for the journey had brought on again the bad cough from which she suffered. One great—and surprising—consolation, however, was soon afforded her: 'To my comfort I have found an English washerwoman!'[12] And with this the diary closes.

According to Teresa, the routine of daily life at Casa Saluzzo was very much like life in Pisa—except that, mercifully, the Hunts were now more than a mile away. They were sharing the Casa Negrotto with Mary Shelley—who, lonely as she had been before their arrival, found their company at such close quarters more than a little trying. As winter approached the weather became very cold and the house held only one fireplace. 'So I am obliged to pass the greater part

of my time in the Hunts' sitting-room, which is, as you may guess, the annihilation of study, and even of pleasure to a great degree. For, after all, Hunt does not like me; it is both our faults and I do not blame him, but so it is.'[13]

There was little association between the two houses. Very occasionally Hunt rode to Casa Saluzzo, prefacing his visits with letters of an embarrassing facetiousness, to show that he was quite at his ease. Teresa, whose dislike for him had become almost an obsession, hastily retreated into her own rooms, and the two men walked in the garden, 'endeavouring to joke away the consciousness of our position'. One evening, indeed, Hunt invited himself to dinner, and over their wine Byron paid his guest 'the compliment of being excited to his very best feelings'; he even, when Hunt rose to go, held him back, saying 'Not yet!' But the next morning 'the happy moment had gone, and nothing remained but to despair and joke'.[14] To this grim little story Teresa, in the margin of her copy of Hunt's book, has added the melancholy comment: 'C'est comme tout le monde!'

About once a month Teresa (but never Byron) went to the Casa Negrotto to call on Mary, and sometimes Mary—who was also doing some copying for Byron—came to Casa Saluzzo. But the two women had little in common, and each, besides, was shut away in the self-absorption of her own feelings—'Mary entirely given up to her grief, and the Contessa to her exclusive affection.'[15] Byron tried to be kind, but was irritated by the tinge of self-pity in Mary's unhappiness, and also by a certain prosaic, prim quality in her character. 'It contained', wrote Teresa, 'no spark of Utopism; she was "un esprit pratique".'[16] She wrote Byron long, priggish, self-righteous letters, reminding him that Hunt was 'after all, a very good man'—and at the same time she confided to her Journal that Byron's mere voice and presence evoked such painful memories that she could hardly bear to be with him. 'I do not think', she wrote after one of her visits, 'that any person's voice has the same power of awakening melancholy in me as Albé's. I have been accustomed, when hearing it, to listen and to speak little; another voice,

not mine, ever replied—a voice whose strings are broken.'[17]

There is a moment in most men's lives when they become aware that the horizon, instead of stretching out indefinitely before them, as it does in youth, is closing in; when there is no longer a constant stream of new acquaintances to take the place of the friends removed by death, separation or attrition; when old ideas and affections have become stale, and new ones are too much trouble. At such times it is natural to seek, if not a new passion, at least a new game to play. Byron, who had never lacked 'an exceeding respect for the smallest current coin of any realm', now found—or at least sought—relief from tedium in 'the noble feeling of cupidity'.[18] From Pisa, early in 1822, he had written to Moore: 'They say that Knowledge is Power. I used to think so; but now I know that they meant money.' And by the time he had settled at Albaro, the 'due care of the needful' had come to absorb a large portion of his thoughts.

'You will perhaps wonder,' he told Kinnaird, 'at this recent and furious fit of accumulation and retrenchment, but it is not so unnatural . . . I always looked to about thirty as the barrier of any rich or fierce delight in the passions, and determined to work them out in the younger ore and better veins of the mine . . . And now the *dross* is coming, and I *loves lucre*. For we must love something . . . At any rate, then, I have a passion the more, and thus a feeling.'[19]

'I loves lucre.' Byron, in the way which unfailingly bewildered poor Teresa, was parodying himself. But for all that, he meant what he said. Among all the contradictions of his character, none is more curious than the mixture of prodigality and cheese-paring that governed his attitude towards money. And, as he grew older,—and much richer, for the death of Lady Milbanke, in 1822, brought him a share in the fortune of Annabella's uncle, the rich Lord Wentworth—the cheese-paring decidedly prevailed.

So, for a good old gentlemanly vice
I think I shall take up with avarice.[20]

Hunt, with the shrewdness that was sharpened by his spite, remarked that this couplet was intended for the public *not* to

believe. 'They were to regard it only as a pleasantry, issuing from a generous mouth.'[21] Nevertheless, there was in it more than a little truth. The 'noble feeling of cupidity' had turned into a habit.

One day, when Trelawny came to call, he looked in at the open window of Byron's study and found him sitting 'with his papers before him, with a painfully puzzled expression and heated brow'. He was poring over Lega Zambelli's accounts. 'My tottle don't square with Lega's. In the time thus lost I might have written half a canto of *Don Juan*—and the amount of the bill is only 143 lire.'[22] He sent an exasperated little note to Teresa, to complain that someone had swindled him, saying that he was beginning to think the Italians quite as dishonest as the English: 'Some Italian, worthy of being an Englishman, has stolen 50 louis from me.'[23] He made a futile attempt to get back at least the interest on a loan of a thousand pounds, made ten years before, to his old acquaintance, Sir James Wedderburn Webster;* he argued with Trelawny about the upkeep of the *Bolivar* ('on the strength of what you will realize', wrote Trelawny, [from *The Liberal*] 'you can afford to keep us afloat'.[24]—and finally he quarrelled about money with both Mary Shelley and Hunt. Both of them ended by accusing him of meanness; but in the case of Hunt, this was certainly unfair. Byron advanced him (through Shelley) £150 before he ever left England, he gave him £250 in 1822 and another £300 within the next six months. Moreover he surrendered to him and his brother the copyrights of the *Vision of Judgment*, of *The Age of Bronze*, and of eight whole cantos of *Don Juan*. But the money, Hunt complained, was given to him 'in driblets', through Lega Zambelli—who may well have been unpleasant about it. 'What a pity it is', wrote Marianne, 'that the good actions of *noblemen* are not done in a *noble manner*! Aye, princely I would have them be!'[25] On the other hand Hunt himself admitted that 'the common rules of arithmetic were, by a

* The husband of Lady Frances Webster, whom Byron was in love with in 1813. Sir James had then taken the opportunity to borrow £1000 from Byron.

singular chance, omitted in my education',[26] and his attempts to save his self-respect took the unfortunate form of couching his requests in the most arrogant of tones. 'I will trouble you for another "cool hundred" of your crowns.'[27] It is not surprising that Byron, who was not a patient man, was soon exasperated to the point of frenzy. He had started by asking Moore, 'You would not have had me leave him in the street with his family, would you?'[28] and had refused, against the united advice of Hobhouse, Murray and Moore, to dissociate himself from *The Liberal*, because 'it would *humiliate* him—that his writings should be supposed to be dead weight!'[29] But from Albaro he was writing to Murray: 'I cannot describe to you the despairing sensation of trying to do something for a man who seems incapable or unwilling of doing anything for himself . . . It is like pulling a man out of a river who directly throws himself in again.'[30]

It was at this stage of the relations that Hunt, with the same tactlessness that he had shown about his own affairs, attacked his patron on Mary Shelley's behalf, threatening that, if Byron did not immediately come to her aid, she would turn to Trelawny instead. He could hardly have chosen a more unfortunate argument. Byron, who had at first been fully disposed to be generous, refusing the legacy that Shelley had left him and making Mary 'frequent offers of money',[31] now replied to Hunt with a sharp and peevish refusal—which Hunt promptly showed to Mary, while at the same time quoting some of Byron's unpleasant remarks. According to Teresa, 'he told Mary that Byron had often spoken of the insufferable tediousness of her visits, and had said that he did not mind supplying her with money, but wished he need never see her again'.[32] Teresa, who genuinely disliked an unpleasantness, was much distressed.

'*Dio buono!*' she wrote to Mary, 'I don't know what to say to you, my dear, for I can't do anything. I feel that I can be of little use, that L. B. will not take advice, that he is very much irritated. But I also feel so much friendship for you, and so much gratitude—for I shall never in my life forget

the goodness you showed me during a very trying time for me —and I venture to offer, if I can do so in any way, to be of help to you. If only my usefulness and my circumstances were as strong as my good will!'[33]

Mary's reply is quoted in full in the 'Vie'.

MRS. SHELLEY TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI[34]

Dear Contessina, your letter has given me great pleasure. A feeling of unfriendliness is so painful that it is a great relief to me to find that the poison has not reached you, too.

I thank you warmly for your offer, but if I am to understand that you wish to be a peace-maker between me and Lord Byron, you will not succeed. I felt no repugnance at the idea of receiving obligations and kindnesses from a friend—and I imagined, or rather I flattered myself, that Lord B. would be glad to hold me not only by the ties of friendship, but by those of gratitude. But now all that is over—a man who does not esteem me cannot be my benefactor. Lord Byron having said that it would be disagreeable to him to see me, I cannot have the pleasure of calling on you, but I shall be delighted to see you here.

Again Teresa attempted to soothe Mary's feelings, but in vain: 'To tell you the truth,' Mary answered, 'my awkward position weighs less heavily upon my heart than Lord Byron's expressions about me, and still more about Shelley. *From a friend* I would accept anything, and if he will show me the least sign of friendship and will again be *glad* to help me, I will feel a renewed obligation to him and be grateful.'[35]

But by now Byron was thoroughly exasperated. Mary turned for help to Trelawny instead—and when, a few months later, the *Hercules* sailed for Greece, she did not even see Byron to say good-bye. 'His unconquerable avarice prevented his supplying me with money, and a remnant of shame caused him to avoid me.'[36] To Teresa, however, shortly before Byron's departure, she wrote in a more cordial strain:

MRS. SHELLEY TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI*

Dear Contessina: I truly feel the full value of your friendly feelings under these circumstances and am grateful to you . . . It seems to me that you are almost more distressed by this bad business than I am myself. I have suffered so much that I have lost the capacity to be agitated by matters that only concern money. I am too poor to lose my friends as well—and if the friendship of Lord Byron has failed me, the rest is not worth much and could not be accepted by me. If Lord Byron will forget anything painful that he may have endured from me and on account of me, if he will recognize what Shelley deserves, it will be with real pleasure that I shall wish him by word of mouth what I now wish him by letter—a good voyage and all the success that I feel sure his plans will have in Greece. Your cordial offers have given me great pleasure and I am most sincerely your affectionate friend

MARY SHELLEY

Meanwhile the long winter dragged on. Once or twice Byron drove in to Genoa to dine with Mr. Hill[37], the British Minister, who found him 'most delightful but most vindictive when he takes dislikes'. Trelawny looked in fairly frequently—an unsettling visitor, who showed only too clearly that he despised all Byron's mode of life in Italy, which he considered was rendering him 'peevish, sickly and indifferent, and discontented with everything', and who continually teased him with new plans.[38] Now and again Mr. Barry—the worthy, punctilious English banker at Genoa[39]—came to call and went away fascinated. (For it was the good, the careful and the steady who could never resist Byron's charm.) He wrote to Byron later on that he was under a great obligation to him, 'and so I shall always consider myself, in having been noticed by you in the way I was, when hundreds and thousands would have gladly done all I could for you, merely

* 'Vie', pp. 1372-3. Undated. Teresa implies that, after all, Byron did supply Mary with funds for her journey home, but this was not the case.

for the pleasure of saying that they had known Lord Byron. Don't take this my Lord as flattery, for I hate and despise a flatterer. I would that you knew how much I wish you well.'[40]

Early in the spring an old acquaintance, Sir James Wedderburn Webster, turned up and delighted his host—whose own grey locks were growing distinctly scanty—by being obliged to wear a curly black wig and by looking considerably older than his age. Hunt's eldest son, after this visit, broke into unmannerly guffaws, so often did Byron introduce the word 'wig' into the conversation. Byron, with Trelawny, returned the call at the Croce di Malta hotel in Genoa—and looked up Webster's name in the visitors' book. 'Damn the fellow's presumption—look here—he is booked Baronet and aged 32 —Why, he is much older than I am!' He then took a pen and wrote *Knight*—aged 40—and said, "Does he think to hum—us with his black wig?" '[41]

But none of these visitors really relieved Byron's tedium. The winter, according to Teresa, was an unusually severe one —as cold as the previous summer had been hot—and the great draughty summer villa, with its stone floors and high ceilings, was, like Casa Negrotto, 'far from snug'. December brought a series of floods, and on the 9th there was a violent thunder-storm, which Byron insisted on watching, with Teresa beside him, at an open window. 'Appuyée à son bras, elle puisait dans cet appui le courage de ne pas se montrer effrayée,'[42] when the lightning actually fell on the lightning-conductor, immediately outside their window, half blinding and stunning them both. 'Madame Guiccioli was frightened, as you may suppose,' wrote Byron to Murray, adding that doubtless, if they had been killed, 'your bigots would have "saddled me with a judgment" '.[43]

The two households were entirely separate, even for meals —since Byron greatly preferred reading to Teresa's chatter or to the prosy, if amiable, conversation of her father—and there seems to have been some tacit agreement by which Teresa did not even go into Byron's rooms without an invitation, but waited for him to call on her or join her in the garden.

Sometimes—but not very often—he would ask her to come

and help him to entertain some traveller who had turned up with an introduction to him. On one such occasion the visitor—a friend of John Galt's—observed to Byron that he was much struck by 'the harshness of the Italian language'. Byron at once got up and went to fetch Teresa. 'I shall make her speak each of the principal dialects,' he said to his guest, and when Teresa had finished he inquired, 'Now what do you think?' But the listener's opinion remained unaltered, and in the letter in which he related the incident to Galt, he added his opinion of Teresa: 'In my eyes her graces did not rank above mediocrity. They were youth, plumpness and good nature.'[44]

Sometimes, however, Byron and Teresa would not meet all day, and then they would exchange little domestic notes, from one part of the house to the other. He would tell her, one evening when he had been dining out, that he had 'got home safely, without delays or difficulties, don't be anxious',[45] or when he had caught a cold, that 'the doctor says the ailment may last some time, but will pass; the swelling under the eye is better'.* On another occasion he asked Teresa if she knew where he had put 'the little American edition of the *Prophecy of Dante*, with the translation by Da Prato'.[46]

One day Teresa sent him a letter from her very devout aunt, Lucrezia Gamba, who had sent her a Life of Santa Teresa, with the comment that that was the true road to happiness.

'By God,' Byron replied, 'your aunt is right—and I too would like to lead the life of Saint Catherine—and make the acquaintance of the "loving Jesuits". She [the devotee of St. Catherine] has found Happiness. She says so—and I believe her—and what else are we all seeking?'[47]

In the mornings, if Byron was feeling sociable, he would take a short stroll with Teresa in the garden or down a steep cliff to the sea—or, if the weather was bad, they would inspect the menagerie. After dinner and a short siesta, Byron would

* V. p. 476, letter No. 135, February 15th, 1823. Byron was subject this winter to attacks of inflammation of the face, and had a similar one in March, after dining out with the British Minister.

go for his ride, spend another hour or two with Teresa in the evening, and then work for the greater part of the night. Such an existence—so Teresa repeats with an emphasis that suggests a lack of inner conviction—was the one, above all others, that suited Byron's *real nature.* 'He loved simple pleasures—sometimes solitude—always retreat. He was never tired today of what he had enjoyed yesterday . . . He felt no desire for movement nor activity, except for great purposes—then indeed he seemed lifted above the earth by mysterious wings of glory and virtue'[48]

Nevertheless, an old Italian friend of Teresa's, Giuliani, who came from Florence to stay with them during the winter, received the impression that they were all extremely bored. 'He was amazed that a man like Byron—so young—so handsome—so rich—could lead a life so monotonous and severe'[49] – and he hurried back, as soon as he decently could, to the more amusing life of the Florentine Carnival, and wrote Teresa a long account of the fancy-dress ball given by the British Colony, where Lady Londonderry had appeared as Cleopatra, covered with diamonds. 'Lord Byron', Teresa comments, 'had definitely given up all such futile pleasures,' —but there is a certain wistfulness in her tone

She was, after all, even now only twenty-three—and she had always enjoyed gay parties. Surely sometimes her thoughts must have gone back to the Ravenna Carnival—to her coach-and-six on the Corso, and the cheerful, cosy Conversazioni, where every guest was a relation or an old acquaintance, and she herself the prettiest, gayest young bride of the party. Yet —for she was an amiable young woman after all, and really did not need much to be happy—she would have been contented enough, if all three of her companions had not been so restless. Count Ruggero, after nearly three years of exile, could think and talk of nothing but his return to the Romagna, to his children and his estates. His father, Count Paolo, had appealed to the Pope on his behalf; many other exiles had already been allowed to return; and every day he hoped for the repeal of his banishment. In February, moreover, tragic

news reached them from Ravenna: the sudden death of Teresa's younger sister Carolina, the prettiest and sweetest of all Count Ruggero's daughters. Byron should, of course, have hurried to Teresa to comfort her. But he did not like tears—and Teresa, in her sentimental, blundering way, was sure to talk, between her sobs, of Allegra. It was easier to send over an unconvincing, conventional little note of condolence—Teresa would probably take it at its face value.

'I cannot express to you my sorrow over your sister's death—but She is happy—it is the living who deserve compassion and sympathy—I have not come to you because I know—by sad experience—that in the first moments sorrow shrinks alike from comfort—from society—and even from friendship itself. And words—what are they? I pity you in silence—and recommend you to Heaven and to Time. Entirely yours*

Meanwhile this news increased Count Ruggero's anxiety to get home—and to take Teresa with him. He had surely been, he told her, the most tolerant of fathers; he had stood by her until now. But now it was time for her to help him, to come home and look after the younger sisters. It was only her duty—and it was also her interest, for how could she ask the Pope to restore her allowance, while still living under Byron's roof?

Pietro's restlessness was of a different kind. His bitter disappointment over the failure of the Romagna insurrection had left him disgusted with all Italian politics—but still, with his incurable hopefulness, he believed that the freedom and justice that he had failed to find at home, were to be met with elsewhere. 'His heart', says Teresa, 'had not yet awakened to any great affection'; there was nothing to keep him in Italy, everything to attract him abroad. First he had dreamed of Switzerland, then of America; then he had wanted to go to Spain as a volunteer; and now all his ardent hopes were centred upon Greece.

* This signature—'tutto tuo'—was sometimes used by Byron at this time, instead of the old 'a.a. in e.' The note is undated.

For already—although Teresa did not yet know it—Greece loomed upon the horizon.

The events which turned Byron's thoughts to Greece, and the fluctuations of his feelings, the strange mixture of motives, which moved him at this time, have been admirably described elsewhere.[50] Here we are only concerned with them, in so far as they relate to the present story. Throughout the winter, Teresa says, she became increasingly and unhappily aware that for Byron Albaro was only a temporary halting-place, an inn upon the road. He told Captain Roberts that he was 'tired of this place, the shore, and all the people on it'.[51]

'I once', wrote Pietro Gamba, 'saw him nearly on the point of departure [for America]. He often felt the want of some other occupation than that of writing, and frequently said that the public must be tired of his compositions and that he was certainly more so.'[52] But where he should go next, he had still no idea. He played for a while with a plan of settling in the South of France; he thought of 'taking a run down to Naples (*solus*, or at most *cum sola*)'*, to gather material for two or more cantos of *Childe Harold*. 'He exhausted himself', says Trelawny, 'in planning, projecting, beginning, wishing, intending, postponing, regretting and doing nothing.'[53] Trelawny, who considered even the most foolish action better than inaction, lost patience, and went off for a riding-tour in the Maremma. But meanwhile—without Teresa's knowledge—Byron was already in correspondence with the Committee which had been formed in London, and had offered them his services, and in March he received a note from one of its members, Edward Blaquière, stating that he proposed to call on Byron, together with the Greek repre-

* *L.J.*, VI, p. 157. 'I was glad', wrote Hobhouse, who had always disapproved of Teresa, 'to hear you thought of Nice, because a removal would be a means of entering upon a new course of life.' For he considered that Byron's health would never be good 'as long as you have daily demands of a certain nature upon your health and spirits'. March 2nd, 1823. Unpublished letter belonging to Sir John Murray.

sentative in London, Andreas Luriottis, on their way to Greece. Byron replied that he would be delighted to see them, 'and the sooner the better'.[54] But now the problem of Teresa had become urgent: something must be said to prepare her, before these gentlemen arrived. 'To this project', he wrote to Sir John Bowring, the secretary of the Greek Committee, in a letter in which he offered 'to go up into the Levant in person', 'the only objection is of a domestic nature, and I shall try to get over it; if I fail in this I must do what I can where I am, but it will always be a source of regret to me.'[55]

But, as Mary Shelley shrewdly remarked, Byron was always 'far more able to take a decided than a petty step in contradiction to the wishes of those about him . . . He does not seem disposed', she added, 'to make a mountain of her [Teresa's] resistance.'[56] And she, of course, had already begun to guess that something was in the wind.

'He had opened his heart', Teresa wrote, 'to the young Count Gamba, asking him however not to say anything yet to his sister, since, the letter being confidential, the decision was not yet irrevocable. But the eyes of the heart penetrate most mysteries, and she saw so unusual a preoccupation, and sometimes so great a sadness, on his face, that she was very anxious. To quieten and reassure herself she tried to imagine all sorts of possible causes: the temporary nature of their stay in Genoa, the possible necessity of her return to the Romagna to assert her rights, the annoyance caused to him by Hunt and the disapproval that all his friends felt of that unhappy collaboration, etc. etc'[57]

But in her heart she knew well enough that none of these were the real causes. 'One day when he was sitting beside her on the terrace which looked out over the bay, he said, looking at her sadly: "I have not even got a portrait of you which is like you. A miniaturist has been recommended to me; will you sit to him for me?" She could only answer him with her tears. On another day, seeing him go down into the garden, she hurried to follow him, as she often did, but this time he told her to leave him alone. She was going away, when he was afraid of having been rough, and came back

again to join her. "How worried you look," she said, "what is the matter?" He was on the point of telling her everything —but then his courage failed him.'[58]

Characteristically, he told Pietro that he must break the news to his sister, as best he could. 'He asked her brother to prepare her gradually, by degrees. The young Count did all he could to soften the blow. He was made eloquent by his kind heart, by his friendship for Lord Byron, by his enthusiasm for the cause. But it was all in vain. To her a death-sentence would have seemed less terrible. She even, in the first moments of her anguish, became unjust towards Lord Byron. She poured out her misery in a letter, in which she accused him of sacrificing everything to his reputation, and added, "I know that we shall never see each other again".'[59]

The scenes of despair succeeded each other. When she was with Byron, she wept and pleaded; and at night, 'unable to find rest, she took up her pen and wrote to him.' Often, she says, she tore up those letters before sending them—'for she wanted to be worthy of him'—but one day, 'coming into her sitting-room when she was not there, he found a fragment addressed to him and read it'.

Even a less irritable man than Byron might well have felt some exasperation, and it must have been in the mood induced by a succession of such incidents that he relieved his feelings to Kinnaird:

'I am doing all I can to get away, but I have all kinds of obstacles thrown in my way by "the absurd womankind", who seems determined on sacrificing herself in every way, and preventing me from doing any good . . . She wants to go up to Greece too! forsooth, a precious place to go to at present. Of course the idea is ridiculous, as everything must there be sacrificed to seeing her out of harm's way. It is a case, too, in which interest does not enter, and therefore hard to deal with; for I have no kind of control in that way, and if she makes a scene (and she has a turn that way) we shall have another romance, and tale of ill-usage and abandonment, and Lady Carolining and Lady Byroning and Glenarvoning, all

cut and dry. There never was a man who gave up so much to women, and all I have gained by it has been the character of treating them harshly . . . If I left a woman for another woman, she might have cause to complain, but really when a man merely wishes to go on a great duty, for a good cause, this selfishness on the part of the "feminie" is rather too much.'[60]

Such letters—for there were two similar ones to Hobhouse*—were outbursts of spleen, such as Byron had always been subject to. 'However, I *will* go ("d——n my eye, I *will* go ashore").'[61] But it is probable that to Teresa herself—since he was both weak, and, in the *presence* of suffering, kind—he presented a decent appearance of tenderness and regret. And his depression—which she naturally put down wholly to his sorrow at leaving her—did not need to be assumed. For now that he had definitely committed himself to heroism and glory, he was seized by one of his customary revulsions of feeling.

'It is not pleasant', he remarked to Lady Blessington, 'that my eyes should never open to the folly of the undertakings passion prompts me to engage in, until I am so far embarked that retreat (at least with honour) is impossible . . . It is all an uphill affair with me afterwards; I cannot for my life "échauffer" my imagination again; and my position excites such ludicrous images and thoughts in my mind, that the whole subject, which, seen through the veil of passion, looked fit for a sublime epic, and I one of the heroes, examined now through reason's glass, appears fit only for a travestie, and my poor self a Major Sturgeon, marching and countermarching, not from Acton to Ealing, and from Ealing to Acton, but from Corinth to Athens, and from Athens to Corinth.'[62]

Moreover, his forthcoming expedition seemed to him not

* On April 7th and April 19th. 'She [Teresa] . . . stands out upon sentiment, and so forth, against the will of half the families in the Romagna, with the Pope at their head.' *Correspondence*, II, p. 258.

only ridiculous and futile; he felt an unconquerable premonition that it would also be fatal. One day he said to Teresa: '"*You* will write my life in Italy.—Write it", he added laughing, "in your fine style of S. Chiara!"—"What can you mean?" she cried. "One does not write the life of a living man!" Lord Byron began to say something, then he cut his sentence short.'[63] But with Lady Blessington he could be more explicit. 'He said that he had a conviction that he should never return from Greece. He had dreamt more than once, he assured me, of dying there.'[64]

With such thoughts haunting him, it was more than a little irritating to have to deal, besides, with Teresa's heroics. He almost preferred the moments when she clung weeping round his neck to those when—'trying to be worthy of him'—she would make a hero of him perforce, and talk about nobility and self-sacrifice

And when at last she went away, he was joined by her brother—dear, candid, enthusiastic Pierino, the 'thorough Liberty boy',[65] who was now completely happy, busying himself with preparations for the journey. He hurried down to the port, to report on the various vessels that Barry was examining; he went to the tailor's, with Byron's design for their uniforms; he entertained two young German volunteers, who had tramped from Ancona to Genoa, after the defeat and dispersal of the European camp in Greece, and drank in their stories of hardship and adventure. He wrote to Dr. Vaccà in Pisa to ask him if he knew of a clever young doctor, who would be prepared to sail with them; he would receive a salary of one hundred pounds, and would be treated 'as a companion and a gentleman'. Dr. Vaccà replied with regret that he knew of no one suitable among his pupils; if he had not had a family and so many ties, he would have been only too glad to go himself. And in the end a young Dr. Francesco Bruno, recommended by the English doctor of Genoa, was engaged instead.*

* GAMBA, op. cit., p. 6. For Byron's own letter to Vaccà, *L.J.*, VI, pp. 222-3. Trelawny greatly resented anyone being asked to see

Old Count Ruggero was happier, too,—for at last he had been recalled from his exile. Soon he would be back in his own familiar world—riding in the cool early morning along the banks of the green canals, looking at his crops, talking to his peasants, playing with his little Faustina, discussing local politics with his old friends. Only one proviso had been attached to his return: he must take Teresa with him. And now, owing to Byron's departure, that problem, too, was solved. She would go home with him and take her mother's place, and surely—when once the parting was over, and Byron was away in Greece—common sense would return to her. She might even consider her husband's insistent proposals, and go back to him; or at any rate, once she was living respectably at home, the Pope would restore her allowance.

Yes, thought poor Teresa, as Papa prosed on, and Pierino came back from Genoa with three new Homeric helmets (but Trelawny said they were ridiculous, and, after all, they were put away), yes, they were all against her. Every consideration, with men, came before sentiment: it was always the woman who was sacrificed.

And now a new trial—more trivial, but perhaps no less galling—was put upon her. 'In the midst of these grave thoughts', she wrote, 'there came into Byron's life a social interlude—but one which played a far more superficial part than the vanity of the other actors has wished the public to believe.'[66] The interlude was created by Lady Blessington.

On the first day after his arrival in Genoa, Lord Blessington—to whom Teresa often refers as 'son collègue dans la Pairie'—came to call; on the second, Lady Blessington herself sat outside the door in an open carriage. It was, declares Teresa, 'une sorte de ruse', for it was a heavy, thundery day, with a storm threatening. And indeed, while Lord Blessing-

to this but himself. 'If he had left it to me I could have induced a clever gentlemanly fellow to have gone with us, an Englishman . . . [but] Vaccà will most likely engage some hungry mercenary Italian.' (Letters, p. 64.)

ton was indoors with Byron, the storm did burst and his guest confessed that his wife and sister-in-law were sitting outside. 'Could Byron do less than go downstairs and ask them in? The Lady's plot had succeeded!'[67] Teresa may have been watching from a window, but neither on this, nor on any subsequent occasion, did she consent to be introduced to Lady Blessington.

'*La mia dama*', wrote Byron, 'Mme la Comtesse G., was seized with a furious fit of Italian jealousy and was as unreasonable and perverse as can well be imagined. God He knows she paid me the greatest compliment . . . I have long come to years of discretion and would much rather fall into the sea than in love, any day of the week.'[68]

Byron was speaking the truth. For all her charm, wit and beauty, he did not fall in love with Lady Blessington. He only, for the whole ten weeks of her time in Genoa, rode with her, took tea with her, laughed and gossiped with her — and talked and talked about himself, as he had laughed and talked with no woman since Lady Melbourne. If indeed he did not always say precisely what Lady Blessington afterwards put down, Teresa's acid remark that her book should be called 'Imaginary Conversations'[69] is certainly unjustified. In vain did she try to fight the newcomer with the primitive weapons at her disposal. 'Madame G. (who never saw her) won't allow her to be pretty and *will* allow her to be not young. I dared not form a judgment on the subject before one who argues with all the insolence of four and twenty.'[70]

But Teresa was much too shrewd not to realize that Lady Blessington's real attraction for Byron was of a very different nature. After three years of exile, she brought to him the very breath of the London drawing-rooms of which he spoke with such contempt—and had never been able to forget. She had all the qualities that Teresa lacked: quickness, irony, *usage du monde*, lightness of touch. She knew, unfailingly, what he was talking about; she could tell him the latest gossip about everyone he had ever met. And when—very soon —he began to talk about himself, how unfeigned was her interest, how perceptive her comments! If there was a faint

touch of malice, too, that was a quality that Byron had always found attractive. It was only poor Teresa, many years later, who was to resent it on his behalf.

But meanwhile it was to Lady Blessington that he could take his confidences. It was to her that he could ruefully remark, after one of Teresa's scenes, that 'liaisons that are not cemented by marriage must produce unhappiness, when there is refinement of mind, and that honourable *fierté* which accompanies it. The humiliations and vexations a woman, under such circumstances, is exposed to, cannot fail to have a certain effect on her temper and spirits, which robs her of the charms that won affection'[71] And then, in a sudden outburst of candour, he would confess that, though he was not happy, it was his own fault. 'Contessa Guiccioli, the only object of his love, has all the qualities to render a reasonable being happy.' Lady Blessington dryly remarked that, from what she had heard, she feared that the Countess Guiccioli, too, 'had little reason to be satisfied with her lot'.[72]

But the next day, in a different mood, Byron would hold forth, instead, on Teresa's virtues: her disinterestedness, her unselfishness, her sweetness—and her noble birth! 'He said that he had been passionately in love with her, and that she had sacrificed everything for him; that the whole of her conduct towards him had been admirable, and that not only did he feel the strongest personal attachment to her, but the highest sentiment of esteem . . . I am persuaded', concluded Lady Blessington, 'this is his last attachment.'[73]

I have before me Teresa's copy of Lady Blessington's *Conversations of Lord Byron*, in which the above remarks are written.[74] It is very informative. Teresa, who was always prodigal of marginal notes in her books, has in this case also interlarded the pages with little slips of paper, on which she has written her longer comments. 'Evidently', says the first of these, 'Lady Blessington has written this book to make Lord Byron express her own personal opinions. She has put into his mouth a great many of her poor opinions of England, so that the blame might fall on him—and then she has taken on for herself the pose of an apologist of England,

in order to gain the good graces of high society—a thing in which she has failed. She has also tried to suggest that Lord Byron conceived a great liking for her. Nothing could be more untrue. She did all she could to seduce his mind (at least) but Lord Byron was aware of the trick and said so to me, adding, "I'm studying her character for Don Juan's Adeline".'

Almost every page has an underscoring or an annotation—occasionally approving, but more often a simple 'Non', 'Nonsense', 'Mensonge' or even 'Pah!' The simple remark 'Byron's was a fine nature', receives the comment 'Oh! True!' And so does the passage in which Lady Blessington remarks that 'all the malice of his nature has lodged itself in his lips and the fingers of his right hand--for there is none, I am persuaded, to be found in his heart'. In the margin of the passage describing 'the bad and vulgar taste predominating in all Byron's equipments, whether in dress or in furniture', and his complacent delight in them, Teresa indignantly scribbled, 'Mais ce sont des mensonges, pour plaise à d'Orset!' [*sic*] Finally there is a passage in which Lady Blessington, with her usual acuteness, has remarked that Byron's 'incontinence of speech' was often accompanied by 'a sort of mental reserve', which caused him 'to disclaim any sentiment of friendship for those he so trusted . . . It was as though he said "I think aloud, and you hear my thoughts; but I have no feeling of friendship towards you"'.* 'C'était précisément son idée', cries Teresa triumphantly, 'en parlant à Lady Blessington Il ne voulait pas qu'elle se fit illusion sur ses sentiments.' The last page of the book contains Teresa's summing-up: 'Fortunately this homage to hypocrisy and cant has done no good to the author: it has not produced the consequences that she hoped for, from her insinuations and exaggerations. Mme de Boissy.'

* LADY BLESSINGTON, *op. cit.*, p. 265. 'His heart was upon his lips,' wrote Moore, 'and it depended wholly upon themselves [his acquaintances] whether they might not at once become the depositories of every secret, if it might be so called, of his whole life.' MOORE, II, p. 796.

At last, after ten weeks of rides and talks and calls (although beside Lady Blessington's reference to 'a nearly *daily* intercourse of ten weeks', Teresa has written, 'Non!') the Blessingtons' stay in Genoa came to an end. Before they left, Byron, who had already had a somewhat dubious transaction with Lady Blessington over the purchase of her horse, Mameluke, succeeded in selling the *Bolivar* to Lord Blessington, and was about to remove its guns, when Barry quietly suggested that it was hardly possible to do so, since the purchaser had already seen them.[75]

On the evening of June 2nd, 'Lord Byron accepta encore un diner d'adieu'. But now, once again, Teresa's version differs considerably from Lady Blessington's own. Teresa affirms that she knows precisely what occurred because, very early in the Blessingtons' stay, she had extracted a promise from Byron never to visit them without taking her brother with him—and so Pietro, too, was at the farewell party. Both he and Byron himself, on their return, gave the same account of the evening: it was not Byron, but Lady Blessington, who had 'une véritable crise de nerfs', and burst into tears! '"I felt", said Byron, "that emotion might soon overcome me, too, and got up to cut short the scene, which Pietro and d'Orsay (whose nerves were probably solider) were watching with some curiosity."'* To this version we should perhaps add, in fairness to Teresa, Hobhouse's comments on the passage in Moore's *Life*, where Moore has described Byron's emotion at parting with the Blessingtons. Hobhouse dryly remarked: 'Very unlike him.'[76]

* 'Vie', pp. 1497-8. Lady Blessington's own account was the following: 'Byron seemed to have a conviction that we met for the last time, and yielding to the melancholy caused by this presentiment, made scarcely an effort to check the tears that flowed plentifully down his cheeks . . . Again he reproached me for not remaining at Genoa until he sailed for Greece, and the recollection brought back a portion of the pique he had formerly felt at our refusing to stay, for he dried his eyes and, apparently ashamed of his emotion, made some sarcastic observation as to his nervousness, although his voice was inarticulate, and his lips quivered when uttering it.' LADY BLESSINGTON, *The Idler in Italy*, I, p. 358.

And now, with the Blessingtons gone, there was nothing left to fill the days, but the preparations for departure. 'I want your aid,' wrote Byron to Trelawny in Rome, 'and am exceedingly anxious to see you. Pray come, for I am at last determined to go to Greece; it is the only place I was ever contented in. I am serious, and did not write before, as I might have given you a journey for nothing; they all say I can be of use in Greece. I do not know how, nor do they, but at all events let us go.'[77]

A ship—'a collier-built tub of 120 tons'—had already been chartered—the choice being made not so much on its own merits, as in consequence of Byron's 'insuperable objection to the flag of this country'.[78] Dr. Francesco Bruno,—in a state of 'perpetual terror', since he had been told that for the slightest fault Byron was capable of having him torn to pieces by his dogs[79]—had agreed to accompany them. Trelawny, complaining of every arrangement that had not been made by himself, arrived. Two dogs and five horses were also to go to Greece; the geese were to remain with Mr. Barry.[80]

Wearily, with no flicker of enthusiasm, Byron settled down to the last dreary arrangements: packing and winding up accounts, and sorting all his manuscripts. 'One day', says the 'Vie', 'he came into Madame Guiccioli's room with a great bundle of manuscripts. "Here are some of my scribblings", he said, "as they came out of my head—Murray has sent them back to me" "I will keep them for you until you come back," she replied. "Do what you like with them," said he, "unless you think they had better be burned. But perhaps", he added, "some day they may be prized!"'[81]

On the following day Byron tried to speak to Teresa about his Will—only to rouse her to one of her most ill-timed exhibitions of sensibility. 'After having begged her to listen to him calmly, and having pointed out that this was only considered an act of ordinary prudence in his own country, he told her that he had arranged with Mr. Barry to make his Will. "But", says Teresa, "the mere idea of an act which

presupposed the possibility of so terrible a misfortune caused her to break into such cries of pain, such supplications as to give up the idea, that he promised to do so." '[82]

Byron's chief motive in drawing up the Will had been the very natural one of making some provision for Teresa before his departure. He intended to add a Codicil, leaving her the £5000 which he had originally bequeathed to Allegra. But Teresa would have none of it. 'She declined in the most positive, and indeed, displeased terms, declaring that she should consider such a bequest as not only an injustice to my daughter by Lady B. and to my sister's family, but as a posthumous insult to herself. It is true', he characteristically added, 'Madame G. has her separate allowance (by the Pope's decree) from her husband, and will have a considerable jointure at his demise, but it is not unhandsome conduct nevertheless.'[83]

Byron indeed, in all the four years of their liaison, seems never to have been able fully to accustom himself to the idea that in Teresa he had met a woman who was completely disinterested. 'I can assure you,' he wrote in amazement to Kinnaird, during the first autumn at La Mira, 'that *She* has never cost me, directly or indirectly, a sixpence . . . I never offered her but one present—a brooch of brilliants—and she sent it back to me with her *own hair* in it . . . and a note to say that she was not in the habit of receiving presents of that value, but hoped that I would not consider her sending it back as an affront, nor the value diminished by the enclosure.'[84]

In the following year, after Teresa had left her husband, he was no less astonished by the disinterestedness of her family. 'I offered any settlement,' he told Moore, 'but they refused to accept it.'[85] To Teresa herself he had written: 'You can trust me—I will make you independent of everyone—at least during my lifetime,'—but he added that he knew she would not accept his offer. 'You are made angry by the mere idea, and want to be independent on your own!'[86] And now this independence was showing its inconvenient side. 'A case in which interest does not enter', he was dis-

covering, was harder to deal with than those he had known before.

Teresa, according to her own account, was still obstinately refusing to return to the Romagna, saying that she would greatly prefer to await Byron's return in Genoa, living 'with a respectable old lady, the Comtesse d'Yson'[87]—or else to retire to the Convent of the Visitation in Nice. Byron, she says, even wrote to the Mother Superior of the Convent, Mère Schlegel, asking whether she could go there.[88] But the reply was unsatisfactory: the Convent was prepared to receive the Contessa, but since it was a cloistered order, it would not be possible for her to go down to the beach every day to bathe, as she wished to do. The old lady in Genoa, too, declined the honour—and so 'Madame Guiccioli was obliged to give way to necessity and duty and prepare herself to follow her father to the Romagna'.[89]

And indeed, as the date of Byron's departure approached, she no longer cared what happened to her. Again and again she made him repeat the same promise: he would send for her, if he could—and if not, he would come back soon—and never leave her again. He promised—and she pretended to believe him. But, she says, it was not easy to be brave when he himself looked so unhappy—and so very ill. Since his illness at Lerici he had become very thin; the curls which she had always so much admired, were wispy and streaked with grey, and he hardly attempted to conceal his depression and indecision. 'Every person', she wrote in the account she gave to Moore, 'who was near him at that time, can bear witness to the struggle his heart underwent (however much he endeavoured to hide it) as the period fixed for his departure approached.'[90] What seemed to her strangest, most ominous of all, was the date that he had chosen: he who had never made any secret of his superstitious feelings, who had never been willing to do anything of the slightest importance on the thirteenth of the month, deliberately chose to sail upon this day.

Three days before it, in a sudden need for feminine understanding and comfort, Teresa went to call upon Mary

Shelley, but found her out. 'Perhaps it was better for you, my dear,' she wrote when she got home, 'my company was never worth much, and now must be unbearable. My feelings are such as cannot be described, and at best can only arouse compassion.'

While she was writing, Byron came into the room, and, on finding out to whom the letter was addressed, gave her a note of his to enclose, adding that 'it had to do with business which was no concern of his'. He also sent a message to Hunt, to say that 'he had left detailed orders about his affairs with . . .'—Teresa had helpfully forgotten with whom, but she *thought* it was Mr. Barry!—'that he sent him cordial greetings, believing that he would excuse him from saying goodbye', and that he also greeted Mary, saying 'he had no feeling of enmity for her'.

When he had gone out of the room again, poor Teresa sat miserably turning over the letter. 'I fear that the letter I enclose may distress you—I dare not open it. But Ld. Byron's tone as he gave it me, made me anxious.—And yet I *must* send it . . .' 'Now,' she added, 'he has gone back to his own room—and he, too, is very sad. What a world, my God!'[91]

So the last days passed. On July 12th Byron spent the whole day receiving callers and settling his affairs, and did not even go near Teresa, who remained alone upon her sofa. 'I have not seen L. B. at all today,' she wrote to Mary Shelley, 'but from Lega I have just heard that perhaps he will not get off tomorrow. Only a few hours more!—and yet, since that moment, I have breathed a little more freely.'[92]

But when the next morning came, the departure *did* take place. 'The fatal day', says the 'Vie', arrived at last. In order to sleep on board, he was to leave Albaro at 5 o'clock. From 3 to 5 he stayed with Madame Guiccioli—and he asked Mrs. Shelley to come and stay with her at 5, so that she should not be alone after he had gone.'[93]

From the garden terrace the two women—from both of whom the sea had taken all that they loved best—watched the ungainly little brig which still lay becalmed in the bay. The

next morning Teresa—half dazed with sorrow—set off with her father for the Romagna.

Half way across the pass, at midday, she felt so faint that her father told the coachman to stop. They got out and, sitting on a stone, she scribbled a few incoherent, heart-broken sentences. 'I have promised more than I can perform, and you have asked of me what is beyond my strength . . . I feel as if I were dying, Byron, have pity on me.' The next day she added: 'With every step that brings me nearer to Bologna, I feel my grief increasing. My God, help me! Come and fetch me, Byron, if you still want to see me alive, or let me run away and join you, at any cost.'

Teresa must have meant to send this note to Barry to forward, for she added a few words to him: 'Mr. Barry je vous prie redisez à Lord Byron que je ne puis plus supporter cette main de fer qui m'opprime? Qu'il retourne ou que je meure.'[94]

But the letter was never sent. And while Teresa was still travelling northwards, Byron's departure had been marked by a series of anticlimaxes. On the 14th, with his ship still becalmed in the harbour, he landed again, and spent a queer, ghost-like day with Gamba, Barry and Trelawny in the gardens of Villa Lomellina.

For there had been yet another delay. On the morning of the 15th the *Hercules*,—by the kind offices of the American fleet—had been towed out of port. But that night a strong wind at last began to blow, and the absurd old tub, 'built on the lines of a baby's cradle', began to 'play at pitch and toss' so violently that the horses, in terror, kicked down their partitions, Pietro Gamba was 'half-dead with seasickness'—and the next morning, with Byron cheerfully remarking that 'he considered a bad beginning a good omen', they were all back in the harbour again. It was then that Byron, with Pietro, paid a last visit to the empty Casa Saluzzo. 'His conversation was somewhat melancholy on our way to Albaro: he spoke much of his past life and of the uncertainty of the future. "Where", said he, "shall we be in a year?"'[95] He sent Pietro away, and for several hours sat alone at the

writing-table in his study. When, a few days later, Mr. Barry opened its drawers he found there a singular object: a long tress of Teresa's hair.

Before finally sailing from Genoa, Pietro sent Teresa a kind but hurried fraternal note— 'written', he wrote, 'with matches dipped in water, so that you may not accuse me of negligence'.

'Byron', he added, 'is well in health, but tired by the activities of the night and day, and by a hot bath—he begs you to excuse him from writing. . . .

'Keep up your spirits, find comfort in your hopes, wait for our letters—try to find in your friendship some consolation for your present sufferings, though I fully imagine how great they are.'

To these consolations Byron added no word. There was nothing left to say.

From Leghorn, on July 22nd, Pietro wrote again to tell his sister that Byron—'very much occupied, and happy in his occupations'—had told him to write on his behalf. They had landed in Leghorn at 4 p.m. on the preceding day, and hoped to sail for Zante the following afternoon, 'where we shall find news from Blaquière, and then decide what to do'. He would write again from Messina 'and from wherever I can, be sure of it. Meanwhile keep up your spirits and bear this passing trouble with the fortitude you have shown on other occasions. And you, my Teresa,' he added, 'what are you doing? How were you received? In which house? In what a situation? What was the journey like? How is your health standing so much distress? How is it with Papa? Tell me everything, everything.

'Among these Livornese Greeks there has been some intriguing which does not promise well. The news is always the same—fortunately we have started in so unenthusiastic a spirit, that nothing can surprise us—and in sight of the world we are not committed to anything more than going there to see how things are, and be of use if we can, but nothing more.'

Finally, in a postscript, there was a little news of Byron.

'Byron is still very well—and all of us too. Our doctor pursues us with pills and other medicines, but luckily we are obliged to send him away, as no one needs them yet. Mylord leads a more active life, both as to bodily exercise and conversation, than anyone on board—but I think he has entirely abandoned his pen.'

And then poor Pietro (for he was the best of brothers), must have imagined Teresa opening this letter, like his preceding one, and looking for a single word from Byron, in vain 'Mio caro Bairon', he must have exclaimed, with his quick flush flooding his cheeks, 'you really *must* add one line!' And so, at the top of the page, we have three scribbled lines in English, in Byron's hand—his last words to Teresa from Italy.

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

Livorno *July 22nd,* 1823

My dearest Teresa: I have but a few moments to say that we are all well—and thus far on our way to the Levant. Believe that I always *love* you and that a thousand words could only express the same idea.

Ever dearest yours N.B.

And with that meagre farewell, on July 23rd, 1823, Byron was off to Greece.

9: NEWS FROM GREECE

If thou regret'st thy youth, *why live?*

For the first few months after her return to the Romagna, very little is known about Teresa. The 'Vie' ends with Byron's departure for Greece, and her letters, both to Byron and to her brother, have unfortunately been lost.[1]

It is not difficult to surmise that she was unhappy. Not only was she lonely and humiliated—a woman, in the eyes of all her little world, who had been 'planted' by her lover—but she was also, since the Pope had suspended her allowance from Guiccioli, and she had firmly refused to accept anything from Byron, completely penniless. Moreover she had now no home. According to a letter that she wrote to Mary Shelley in November,[2] her father—in spite of having a permit from the Consul of the Papal States in Genoa—was stopped at the frontier of the Romagna by the police and was sent off to Ferrara, where he remained 'in Purgatory', in the company of several other exiles, for many months. Teresa herself was allowed to proceed to Bologna, and there was taken in by her old friend and teacher Paolo Costa,[3] and it was to his house—'in a retired situation by the city walls'—that all Byron's and Pietro's letters were addressed. 'I owe to my friends', she told Mary, 'any strength that has supported me up till now.' Her days were spent in waiting—for Byron to summon her, for Byron's return to her—and for Byron's letters.

Very long must the intervals between them have seemed, and very meagre the comfort to be derived from them, when at last they did arrive. Both her lover and her brother were now very far away, caught up in an incomprehensible, impersonal masculine world, in which there was no place for her. Moreover it was evident that they were both enjoying themselves. In a general comment on Byron's letters, half a life-

time later, Teresa loyally refused to admit any disappointment. 'His epistolary style,' she wrote, 'even in the most passionate circumstances, was always simple.' He was 'too sincere to use the flowery phrases of other lovers', but his letters—'so natural, so kind—without exclamation marks—without any form of affectation—show him as he really was'.[4]

But this, unfortunately, is precisely what his letters from Greece fail to do. Even in the early days, when his letters to Teresa were still passionate, they were not intimate; he never wrote to her with the wit and ease of his correspondence with Lady Melbourne or his men friends, and it plainly did not occur to him to confide in her when he was troubled. But certainly none of his earlier letters had been as short and flat as those which now came from Greece. Not only did they contain little news and no clue to his state of mind, but they showed very little interest in hers. There were no inquiries about her welfare, no references to shared recollections; the dry little notes, with their mechanical endearments, suggest that, like the first one, they were all scribbled off in a hurry—with Pietro, apologetic but pressing, standing over the writer with a pen. The best that one can say for them—and it is not much—is that they were fairly frequent, and that their flatness was a conjugal flatness, a tacit acceptance of the fact that, if he did come back, it would be to her. For after all—he wrote it to Barry, even if these letters show few signs of it—'I left my heart in Italy.'[5]

For all this there is, I think, an explanation. Nearly two years before leaving for Greece, Byron had written to Augusta about his liaison with Teresa, 'This is a finisher.' He meant, as is clear from the context, an end to his casual love-affairs—and most of all to his relationship with Augusta herself. 'You will probably never see me again as long as you live.'[6] But in a wider sense the phrase is equally applicable: when he sailed for Greece he was already, in emotional capacity, 'un uomo finito'; he had come to an end.

When, in 1819, he had told Hoppner, 'I can hope no more to inspire attachment, and trust never again to feel it', —as when he assured Teresa herself that she would be his

'last Passion'—he was not merely making a vow of fidelity. Already then, though not yet thirty-one, Byron was conscious of a physical decay far in advance of his years—and of a corresponding, overwhelming weariness. 'At thirty', he told Webster, 'there is no more to look forward to.' Three years later both Henry Fox and Lady Blessington noted, with faint amusement, that he spoke of himself as an old man; they both thought that this, too, was one of his poses.[7] But it was Byron who was right. When the autopsy of his body was made at Missolonghi, the doctors found, not only an acute condition of inflammation of the brain, but 'the skull like that of an octogenarian',[8] with the sutures fused together, as in extreme old age.

The best proof of the degree to which Teresa had been both a vitalizing and a stabilizing influence in his life, is the sheer amount of work he got through, during their liaison. But when, in 1823, he turned his back on 'poeshie', he had come to an end, at the same time, of the stuff of which a large part of poetry is made: human tenderness, passion, attachment.

He had had enough. Not, in particular, enough of Teresa. He recognized her affection, her disinterestedness, her loyalty, if he came back to anyone, he would come back to her. But he had had enough of all women—all scenes—all emotional demands—which perhaps is merely another way of saying, that he had had enough of life. This is, I believe, what gives their peculiar flatness and unconvincingness to his meagre little notes to Teresa from Greece. He could not very well write to the poor woman: 'I neither believe I will come back, nor wish to; and if I did, the only person I care to see, is a little girl in England.' And so he wrote instead: 'Perhaps in the spring you can come out to join us', 'We are not forgetting your Excellency and her sentimental projects', 'All will go well by and by'. But it is all quite unconvincing; these are the letters of a ghost.

Pietro's letters, on the other hand, are those of a most affectionate and considerate brother, who can still find time to be sorry for Teresa, Even in his excitement over his own

adventures, he never fails to inquire, with Latin warmth and correctness of family feeling, about his sister's and father's concerns. Although his letters add very little that is unknown to us about the Greek adventure, they provide a straightforward record of it, as seen through his candid and hopeful, but by no means stupid, eyes,—a picture so sympathetic, and, within its limitations, so unmistakably truthful, that even at the risk of repeating what has already been told elsewhere, it has seemed desirable to quote most of his letters.[9] As, in the earlier part of this book, Byron has been revealed in the descriptions of Teresa and of his Italian friends—so now he appears, in Greece, through Pietro's eyes. It must, however, be remembered that, in writing to his sister, Pietro was anxious to omit anything that would stir up what he called her 'diseased imagination', and might even, perhaps, bring her rushing across to Greece to join them.

His letters, which he sometimes sent by way of Ancona and sometimes to Genoa, to be forwarded by Barry, seem to have taken five or six weeks;[10] and often there was a longer interval, in which Teresa received no letter at all. She had hoped for news from Messina or Zante, but—after many long weary weeks of waiting—the first was from Argostoli, in the Island of Cephalonia. It was dated August 4th and told her that they had arrived that same morning.

'You will have been surprised not to receive any letters from Messina or from Zante. When we sailed past Messina the wind was so favourable and we were so well provided with water, that we thought it unnecessary, indeed undesirable, to stop. Another reason which determined us to go to Cephalonia, rather than Zante, was that our travelling-companion, Mr. Hamilton-Browne* is a particular friend of the Governor of the island, from whom we can therefore expect every kindness. Indeed, I hope we have not made a mistake —I say hope, because we have not found him in the island, but are expecting him tomorrow.

'No reliable news from Greece, so that we shall stay here

* A young Scotsman, of strong philhellenic sympathies, who had come aboard at Livorno.

a while before taking any steps—indeed, I think we shall not move until we have had further news, and have fully weighed the state of matters here. However, go on addressing our letters to Zante, because wherever we may be, they will certainly reach us from there—and we are in touch every day.

'My lord is in excellent health—and good humour. If only you could be, too!'

At the bottom of the page there was a postscript from Byron, in English:*

My dearest Teresa: I cannot write long letters as you know—but you also know or ought to know how much and entirely I ever am your A.A. in E.† N.B.

Then there were three more lines from Pietro:

'At Messina, by the pilot-boat, I sent a message on a piece of wood, to a Banker, to tell you we had passed by. I couldn't write on paper, without landing.'

Pietro also wrote an account of the journey to his father, adding:

'The news that we have been able to collect here is that the Turkish fleet has imposed a strict blockade on all the coast of Morea, and the Greek one has not yet appeared—it is believed—for lack of money to pay the crews—but is expected any day. On land the Turks are said to be marching against the Morea in three bodies, but the Greeks are awaiting them without moving—indeed there is a rumour of a passage of arms favourable to the Greeks at Thermopylae.'

During the nine days of the voyage Byron's spirits had gradually revived. Trelawny—in what Mr. Nicolson calls 'his particularly vivid and untruthful manner'—has described the fluctuations of his moods, 'cold fits alternating with hot ones', and uproarious high spirits, expressed in schoolboyish practical jokes, followed by dark forebodings. 'Lord Byron and myself', boasted Trelawny to the builder of the *Bolivar*, Captain Roberts, 'are extraordinary thick, we are inseparable,

* Byron's letters to Teresa from Greece are all in English, since before he left, Teresa, who could already speak the language a little, had stated her intention of mastering it before his return.

† Amico Amante in Eterno = Friend and Lover for Ever.

but mind, this does not flatter me. He has known me long enough to see the sacrifices I make in devoting myself to serve him.'[11]

One of Trelawny's notes, jotted down at this time, differs slightly from the version he polished up later on, for the *Records*:

'"I can assure you, Mr. Trelawny, you will find there is nothing in Greece but robbers, rocks and vermin," said Byron's yeoman bold (Fletcher) as we lay becalmed in the Ionian sea on board the brig *Hercules*. I was going up the companion ladder, and Fletcher was what he called making himself comfortable—with bottled ale—gin—biscuits and a Cheshire cheese. "My Lord can't deny what I say. Lord, Sir, my Lord's linen was covered with them!"

'I found Byron seated, as usual, on deck. He had heard Fletcher's discourse and answered "No, I do not deny it,—it's very true—for those who take a hog's eye view of things!"

'After a considerable pause he continued: "I was happier in Greece than I have ever been before or since—and if I have ever written [well] (as the world says I have, but which they will pardon my doubting) it was in Greece—or of Greece—or if I have ever acted wisely—it was leaving that cursed Italy.

'"Till I went to Italy—I knew nothing—and now am I—if a man should speak truly—little better than one of the wicked—I will leave off—sack—and live cleanly, as a nobleman should do".'[12]

Pietro's next letter on August 10th, from Argostoli, showed that they had still reached no decision about their plans.

'We are not yet decided where we shall go, or when, or if—but you can be assured on one thing, that we shall take every care of our health and safety. You will hear a great many stories of every kind about Greek affairs—and perhaps about us—but pray, if your imagination allows it, keep them in quarantine. The news that we have received from Greece is not yet such as to enable us to take a decision. I cannot tell you how much kindness Mylord has received from the Governor,[13] from the officers of the garrison,[14] and from all

his compatriots in this district. His health is excellent and his good spirits also continue constant. It is not possible that we may be able to settle down honourably and conveniently in these islands—but until we have taken some decision pray do not let yourself be tempted to any foolish action.'

Then followed a few lines in Byron's writing:

My dearest T[a]. We are here all very well and extremely well used by all the English here. Of Greece and of the Greeks—I can say little—for everything is as yet very uncertain on that point. I pray you to remain tranquil and not to believe any nonsense that you may hear; for the present we remain in this island—till we have better intelligence. Tomorrow we are going to make a tour in the island—for a day or two—ever your most affectly A.A. in e. N.B.

On the following day Byron was sending another letter by way of Ancona.

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

St. Euphemia—Cephalonia *Ag.°* 11° 1823

My dearest Teresa:—All Well! and doing well. We are on the point of embarking for Ithaca—after a warm ride in the Sun from Argostoli. Pietro your brother will have told you the rest. Do not be alarmed as our present voyage is merely for pleasure in the Islands. Ever and entirely A.A. in e

+ + + N.B.

P.S. We have received great kindness and hospitality from the English here, both military and civil.

Pietro added:

We have this morning begun our journey to Ithaca, and after 9 hours of travel on muleback have reached the port, from which we shall soon embark for the home of Ulysses and Penelope. Here in the Vice-Governor's house we have received every possible kindness—the fruit of the many which we received in Argostoli from the Governor and from the

officers of his garrison. Our trip will last several days, and then we shall return on board—waiting for news. For the present we propose to wait and form a mature opinion, and Byron will certainly not change this resolution. Do not take any step without hearing from me. PIETRO G.

Pietro's and Byron's next letter was written on August 19th, after their return from Ithaca.

'We got back two days ago,' wrote Pietro. 'Our voyage was fortunate. It lasted seven days, of which we spent three visiting the interior of the Island. We enjoyed our cavalcade very much. The island is really enchanting, and although it is full of classical memories, or at least of places where the imagination can create them, we have enjoyed ourselves more in looking at the beautiful views and tasting the exquisite grapes, than in wearing out our brains over some crumbling ruins.[15] Mylord was pleased, in good health and excellent spirits—he led a very tiring life in this hot weather, and what is more, in the hottest hours of the day—on muleback and on foot he climbed up mountains which by God were not mild,—and is none the worse.

From all the British officials in the island we received, as we have here, a thousand kindnesses. We dined three times with the Governor,[16] and once with the Greek Regent or Gonfaloniere of the Island—an excellent man. The memory of this little journey will always be delightful.

No letter, not a word from Italy since our departure. I am beginning to be a little anxious, for it is already 39 days since we left you, and in a month letters should come—but the sea will not obey our laws—so we are waiting. You, too, try to be calm if our letters should be delayed—for that would be the only cause, not my negligence—you see that I am missing no opportunity.'

Byron's letter followed.

Cephalonia *Ag°* 20° 1823

My dearest Teresa: Pietro will have satisfied you with the account of our health and safety. We have been travelling in

this Island and in Ithaca and have visited the places to which the remembrances of Ulysses and his family are attached.—Of political news we can say but little as little is actually known —and even that is partly contradictory.————Let me hope that you keep up your spirits and that you will continue to do so.——

I write in English as you desired, and I suppose that you are as well acquainted with that language as at Genoa.—— We have already written three or four times, and will continue to do so by every good opportunity.—I am just going to take a ride on shore with Colonel D[uffie] and take advantage of the fresco for that purpose.

Ever dearest T. a.a. in e. + + + + N.B.

Pietro's account of Byron's constant good health and spirits was only partly accurate. He entirely failed to mention, for instance, a most curious and frightening paroxysm of rage—terminating in a convulsive fit—by which Byron was seized on the night of their return to Cephalonia, during a formal reception given for him by the monks of the monastery on the hill of Samos. In the midst of the ceremonies, when the Abbot,—who with his monks, had received him with the highest honours—was intoning a long eulogy, Byron 'suddenly burst into a paroxysm of rage,' and 'turning to us with flashing eyes, vehemently exclaimed "Will no one release me from the presence of these pestilential idiots? They drive me mad!" Seizing a lamp, he left the room. The amazed Abbot, in a low, tremulous voice said, significantly putting his finger to his forehead—"Ecco, è matto, poveretto!" '[17] Byron was then seized with violent spasms in the stomach and liver, 'stamped and swore at the others like a maniac'—and it was only after several vain attempts on the part of the terrified Dr. Bruno and of the rest of the party that he was at last persuaded to take a soothing pill. By the next day it was all over, and in the evening Byron was happily singing Tom Moore's songs, as they rode back over the mountains to the *Hercules*.[18]

Pietro's next letter to Teresa was written from Argostoli

on August 23rd; it contained no fresh news, and Byron's brief postscript was equally flat and uninformative.

My dearest T^a. I have opened Pietro's letter just to add a few words—not having [at] present time for more as the Post goes this evening.—We are all well—and I am ever as usual yours a.a. in e. N.B.
P.S. I feel sure that you will rather be glad to hear from us briefly but frequently—than at length but rarely.

The scarcity of news in both these letters was partly due to the genuine uncertainty of the writers. On Byron's return from Ithaca he had received a flattering letter from England, appointing him as the principal agent in Greece of the Greek Committee; but the news from Greece itself was not so satisfactory. The Eastern part of the country, he heard, was under the control of the military chieftain Odysseus; the Western acknowledged the rule of Prince Mavrocordato,* who, however, was a refugee in the island of Hydra. Emissaries of each of the contending parties hurried to Cephalonia —since the news of Byron's arrival had now become known, —to secure the help of the rich English Lord. 'To nobody', says Finlay, 'did the Greeks ever unmask their selfishness and self-deceit so candidly.'[19] After listening to them all, Byron was forced to comment that 'there never was such an incapacity for veracity shown, since Eve lived in Paradise'.[20]

Nevertheless, in the third week of August, he did intend—in much the same spirit 'as Mrs. Fry went to Newgate'[21]—to sail across to the Morea. But the captain of the *Hercules*

* This was the same Mavrocordato whose Greek lessons Mary Shelley had so much enjoyed, during his exile in Pisa in 1821. 'Do you not envy my luck', she wrote to Mrs. Gisborne, 'that an amiable, young, agreeable and learned Greek Prince comes every morning to give me a lesson?' Shelley, however, never cared much for 'our turban'd friend', and Trelawny wrote later on to Mary: 'I hope ere long to see his head removed from his worthless and heartless body. He is a mere shuffling soldier, an aristocratic brute.' (But this was after Byron's death, when Trelawny wanted Mavrocordato's stores for Odysseus.)

had no wish to have his ship captured by the Turks. 'No, my Lord,' he cried, when Byron proposed that they should sail upon a Sunday, 'there shall be no heathenism and outlandish doings upon my ship on a Sunday.'[22] When however, the date of sailing was shifted to a weekday, the captain was no less reluctant. Finally yet another piece of bad news arrived from Greece: the patriot Marco Botzaris—the most estimable of the Greek chieftains, with whom Byron had been in correspondence—had been shot in the head by a Turkish bullet.

It was at this point that Byron decided to pay off the *Hercules* and to disembark in Cephalonia, to await the turn of events. In order not to embarrass Colonel Napier by his presence, he did not settle at Argostoli, but took a small house in the village of Metaxata, four miles away. Here, in the company of Pietro Gamba and Dr. Bruno—and attended, in addition to Lega Zambelli, Fletcher and Tita, by an unruly bodyguard of forty Suliots, who soon had to be shipped to Missolonghi—he spent a monotonous, and very agreeable, four months. His health was excellent: the climate delightful. Trelawny had taken off his heroic attitudes to the Morea, from where he subsequently sent accounts of the 'potent leaders of the Greek military factions . . . each and all intent on their own immediate interests'.[23] In the evenings Colonel Napier and the other officers of the garrison rode out to dine, and on Sunday mornings Dr. Kennedy, that worthy Scottish Methodist, would hold Gospel meetings, one of which Byron actually attended, and listened (although with 'signs of impatience') for no less than four hours. 'I would have no Hell at all,' said Dr. Kennedy at one point of the subsequent discussion, 'but would pardon all, purify all. . . .'

'"I would have", cried his Lordship, "my sister and my daughter, and some of my friends—and a few others, and let the rest shift for themselves." "And your wife also?" I exclaimed. "No," he said. "But your wife, surely you would save your wife?" "Well," he said, "I would save her too, if you like." '[24]

In these discussions Dr. Kennedy found himself consider-

ably hampered by the fact that none of his listeners—although Byron fetched a Bible from his bedroom and said that it was given to him by his sister, and he read it very often—were even familiar with the meaning of his words. Thus Byron asked him what he meant by the word 'grace'. 'I the more readily closed the book,' said Dr. Kennedy, 'as I perceived they had no distinct conception of many of the words I used.'[25] Finally Byron inquired, 'What more do you wish of me in order to consider me a good Christian?' 'To kneel down and pray God.' 'This', he exclaimed, 'is too much, my dear doctor.'[26]

In one of the more tedious chapters of her published book about Byron, the one about his religious views, Teresa has referred at great length to those conversations—in which she liked to find a confirmation of Byron's essentially religious attitude to life. Once, she said, when Byron was riding with Pietro Gamba at Ravenna, he cried out, at the end of a long religious argument: 'Vous confondez vos idées religieuses avec vos antipathies politiques. Je considère l'athéisme comme une folie.'[27]

On another occasion, at La Mira, when a religious procession was passing and one of Byron's grooms failed to dismount and fall on his knees, he reproved him severely. The man excused himself, saying that he was no Catholic, whereupon Byron firmly replied: 'Nor am I a Catholic, but a Christian.'[28]

Finally one evening, in Pisa, when the whole company was laughing at the tale of a miracle that had taken place in Lucca, Byron alone took the story seriously. 'Mockery,' he said, 'is perhaps a faculty which God has given us to make up for our lack of faith—as one gives toys to sick children.'[29]

Teresa—herself a *pratiquante* rather than a *croyante*—did not observe that all these remarks, which she quotes as proofs of faith, are rather evidences of a profound respect for conformity.

Religion, however, was not the only subject that was dis-

cussed in the little house at Metaxata. Often it was filled with emissaries from the various Greek parties, who would crowd into Byron's room, vehemently pointing out that their faction, and theirs alone, deserved the support—and the dollars—of the English Mylord. Their dissensions provided the best possible excuse for Byron's present inaction. 'It must be the cause,' he told Hobhouse, 'and not individuals or parties, that I endeavour to benefit.'[30] Thus he was enabled to attribute to prudence and impartiality delays which had perhaps a deeper source in an acute, torturing lack of self-confidence, an overwhelming desire to postpone the time when he would have to turn from deliberation to action.*

And Pietro, dear Pietro—although very much bored at Metaxata—took it all at its face value. Of all the services he rendered to Byron, this—an unswerving loyalty and acceptance, not only of his orders, but of his motives—was perhaps the greatest. Every picture of himself that Byron most wished to present, was mirrored in Pietro's candid eyes. And is it not possible—since we all, in a measure, resemble the image that our friends form of us—that Byron, when with Pietro, indeed became not unlike the single-minded, generous, heroic figure that Pietro saw?

In spite, however, of all his loyalty, Pietro was finding the prolonged delays at Metaxata more than a little trying.

'Four days ago we left Argostoli and returned to this village, 9 miles from the town. It is placed on a pretty hill—on the left one sees the Mount Revitos, or Black Mountain, which is considered the first of all Greece after the Pindo—and on the right a fine plain, the sea, Zante opposite, and far off the Morea. You can see a fine picture, but by God, there is nothing but a picture. Imagine our adventures in this exile. Every morning I go out and shoot snipe and by bad luck the best place for them is near the house of a damned old woman, who swears at me every morning, in Greek and Venetian, because she is afraid that with my shooting I will

* NICOLSON, op. cit., p. 155. 'At Metaxata he could be generous, be acute, be prudent; at Missolonghi he would have to *control*.'

set fire to her house. We have not made the acquaintance of any Christians, male or female, in this country.

In view of the very uncertain condition of things in the Morea, M[ylord] has decided to stay here for a while, until he can reach a mature decision, for one can learn the truth here only with the greatest difficulty—perhaps no better than in Italy[31]—and this is not surprising, for we have learned from frequent experience that one often discovers things less well and more slowly from nearby, than from far away. The opinion of the Greek Nation that we have heard in Italy is not mistaken, if what we have gathered until now is true. Whatever gossip you may hear about us, do not be anxious—our conduct should reassure you. Trelawny with Mr. Browne, one of our companions, has gone to Tripolitza to learn more details about the state of things. We are waiting for their reports soon.

Poor Papa! what a lot of trouble—all falling on him!* If the affection of his children can be of some comfort to him in his persecution, pray do not neglect anything to give him further proofs of it. I am glad about grandfather's behaviour —a fanatical Christian but an excellent man; and his nature has shown itself on this occasion.† God grant him a long life. . . .

Byron is very well indeed and always has been. I look after him as well as I know how, both for his health and everything that concerns him—and he is well, and everything goes well. In all that we have met with so far, he is much more pleased with his own compatriots than with the Greek patriots, and by God he is right. We shall see in future.

Take heart, and bear stoutly your anxiety and your troubles. I am glad to see you resigned and tranquil. That is the way to conquer and change one's fortune, my Teresa, be sure of it!'

* Count Ruggero was still living in half-banishment at Ferrara.

† Count Paolo Gamba, Count Ruggero's father, was a *Sanfedista*, and could not but disapprove of his son's and grandson's activities; but on this occasion family seems to have been stronger than politics.

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI[32]

September 11th, 1823

My dearest T.: We have received y^r^ letters safely, and I am rejoiced to hear so good an account of y^r^ health. [We are still in Cephalonia waiting for news of a more accurate description, for all is contradiction and division in the reports of the state of the Greeks etc.————I shall fulfil the object of my mission from the committee—and then (probably) return into Italy for it does not seem likely that as an individual I can be of use to them. At least no one other foreigner has yet appeared to be so—nor does it seem likely that any will be at present. (Pietro will have said more perhaps on this subject.)

Pray be as cheerful and tranquil as you can—and be assured that there is nothing here that can excite anything but a wish to be with you again—though we are very kindly treated by the English here of all descriptions. Of the Greeks I can't say much good hitherto and I do not like to speak ill of them though they do so of one another.]* We are here in a very pretty village—with fine scenery of every description—and we have kept our health very well. Pray remember me to Costa and his wife—and to Papa and all our acquaintances and allies. + + +

When we meet again (if it please God) I hope to tell you several things that will make you smile. I kiss your Eyes (*occhi*) and am most affectly. a.a. in e. + + + + N.B.

It was now some months since Byron had sailed, and it must have begun to be clear to Teresa, in spite of his reassuring sentences, that he was hardly likely to return before the winter. She appears still to have been staying with Paolo Costa, for a letter from Pietro to him thanks him for 'helping Papa to obtain justice', and for 'alleviating poor Teresa's situation by your Friendship.'[33] Moreover, Teresa seems now to have made a valiant attempt, under the influence of her old teacher, to conquer her fears and occupy her mind by undertaking a course of philosophical studies—a decision to

* See notes 32, 36 and 39 on page 516.

which Pietro refers with whole-hearted, and Byron with somewhat ironic, approval. She felt, perhaps, that she was likely to need any philosophy she could acquire, and it was, indeed, nearly another month before any more news from Pietro reached her.

'Here we are still in Metaxata—that is in Cephalonia—and I don't see how we shall find a way out.—I imagine you are in Bologna, and Papa in Ferrara; everything therefore in *statu quo*. How many tales have you heard? What spectres have been called up by your diseased imagination? I do not know better remedies than Paolo's philosophic-philological dissertations, Giuditta's* affectionate care—and the task that you have set yourself, or that Paolo has given you. I believe that he, as a moral adviser, has considered it the best remedy for your imaginary ills; and the work will deserve great praise and will have made a good beginning if it has a good effect on you. From your letters I will judge what it achieves.

You ask me why we are here and perhaps shall stay on here. I will answer you briefly (for a whole book would not be enough for a detailed description) that the Greek situation has not yet given us any opportunity in which one could believe B[yron]'s help to be truly efficacious and useful, because there are as many parties in this happy land as there are people who can have some hope of acquiring power or plunder—because the best have already been exiled or are disgusted—and because the general interests of Greece are understood by few Greeks, and desired by even fewer. We cannot feel much surprised, and the reasons are well known. But meanwhile what can a foreigner do, in the midst of these rascals (I am speaking of the chiefs), but wait for a better opportunity? Byron has confirmed his original opinion of these people, but has not therefore changed his intentions. And this certainly deserves all the greater praise. You will not be of my opinion.

Greek affairs in general are not in a bad way, and will proceed—chiefly following the law of inertia in physics, which ordains that bodies in motion shall advance, and

* Paolo Costa's wife.

motionless ones remain still. The Greeks obey the first law, and the Turks the second—they are the most indolent and bestial race ever seen under the Moon. Let them proceed. For my part I wish with all my heart that Greece should be free—and would like to co-operate, if it is in my power—then, good night. With all possible freedom and every desirable advantage, nothing could keep me long among the Greeks. They are the vainest and most insincere race on earth, a chemical aggregate of all the vices of their ancestors, plus many taken from the Turks, and a good dose of the Jewish—diluted and mixed in the melting-pot of slavery. If Heaven helps them to freedom, they will cast them off [the vices]—but it will not be for us, or for our sons, to see them cleansed. My opinion may be—I hope it is—too severe! the fruit perhaps of the bitterness that has come over me at the constant sight of the cowardice and intrigues of these damned Ionians. The others I only know about by hearsay. But—but—we started in such a tranquil state of mind, and so prepared for the worst, that I am almost ashamed to find myself so heated.

Everyone, from all sides, is besieging Byron to extract his *duros* [dollars], but after having prodigally scattered about a thousand—he has now again become so much attached to them, that I very much doubt whether they will find a blacksmith capable of making a key to his purse. And he is right, if he does not know why or to whom.

Oh, if I tried to count up all the victories, and defeats and marvellous captures that are rumoured every day! It appears, however, to be an incontestable fact that during the last few days eighteen thousand Turks have been besieging Missolonghi—in which there are five or seven thousand Greeks. Marco Botzari, a true hero, and the Chief of the Suliotes, was killed a month and a half ago: and Mavrocordato wrote to us recently from Hydra, where he had fled from the threats and persecutions of his fellow-countrymen. The usual Greek recompense to talents and virtue.

To come back to us. We are well. Byron has returned to his hermit's life, and is satisfied with it. We have a fine view,

good air—and sometimes we are given a fine dance, which is not too agreeable. One day we felt 7 earthquakes. At the first and strongest we were obliged to run away. There is a staircase down in the court. Byron ran down it *fast enough,* I jumped down half of it—and there is a great argument between us as to who deserves the prize for running fastest. His argument is, that I touched the ground first, mine, that I went out of the house behind him. You judge.[34]

What is happening? Has a new Pope been elected? It should surely bring about some change, and for us it could hardly be for the worse. Do not be too inactive, for perhaps this is a good moment to reacquire your rights.'[35]

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

8bre 7mo 1823

My dearest T.:[36] [Pietro has told you all the gossip of the island—our earthquakes—our politics—and present abode in a pretty village. (But he has not told you the result of one of his gallantries—which I leave to himself to describe.)

As his opinions and mine on the Greeks are nearly similar —I need say little on that subject. I was a fool to come here but being here I must see what is to be done]

If we were not at such a distance, I could tell you many things that would make you smile—but I hope to do so at no very long period Pray keep well and love me as you are beloved by yours ever a.a. + + + in e. N.B.

Pietro's next letter, written on October 14th, brought little fresh news.

'Our situation is unchanged—nor is there any reason why a change should come. Nothing from Greece since my last letter. Missolonghi besieged by land and blockaded by sea, but in the Turkish manner, that is not strictly. It is well ammunitioned, well furnished, sufficiently provisioned, and here they are raising collections to send off more stores. Byron is becoming very uneasy about his *duros,* and will hardly escape having to give up some of them.

'Poor Byron! He has been much saddened by the news

that reached him a fortnight ago about an illness in the head of his dear Ada.[37] You can imagine how his imagination raised up a thousand melancholy phantoms and added to them the fear that some months might pass before he received any more news, the suspicion that the information was sent to him on purpose to torment him, and the dread that it might be an hereditary disease. However another bulletin has arrived, saying that she is much better and out of danger, but is having trouble with her eyes. His sadness is much decreased, but not over.

'You must add another remarkable reason [for his depression]. He ate a goose on the 29th, a solemn feast as you know [Michaelmas day]. He wanted another for the 19th, which is also a feast-day.[38] The servants deceived him and gave it him on the 11th. You can imagine the uproar!

'Byron is impatient to go out riding. I cannot write any more.'

Byron's postscript reflects his hurry:

My dearest T.—We have not heard from you for some time. Why do not you write? We have sent several letters—ever and entirely yours a.a. in e. + N.B.

A few days later, on October 21st, Pietro sent another letter by hand, by means of 'a German baron', on his way back to Italy. He told his sister to 'thank Paolo on my behalf for the trouble he is taking to straighten out your ideas', implored her 'to temper your heated and sometimes feverish imagination', and enclosed a postscript from Byron.

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

[*October 21st*, 1823]

My dearest T.—I shall merely add two words to Pietro's letter—to scold you for not having written.—We are all tolerably well and tranquil—and except an earthquake or two daily—(one of which broke the Lambico for filtering the water—last night) which rock us to and fro a little—things are much as when we wrote before.

I hear you are turned moral philosopher—and are meditating various works for the occupation of your old age—all which is very proper.—ever yours a + a + in e + N.B.

Another letter followed before the end of the month.

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI[89]

8^{bre} 29*th*, 1823

My dearest T.: Enclosed is a letter from Pietro written upon a scurvy scrap of paper—but containing, I believe, all that is to the purpose relative to our present situation.—We are tolerably well and so forth—but the weather is cool—and *mi-me ne* etc. etc. etc. *Capite Eccellenza?*————* I received yr letter of the date of 7bre and we have written by every opportunity.————

Under Costa's tuition I presume that you have made a great progress in Metaphysics;—I have written nothing but letters or dispatches lately. A connection of mine—Lord Sydney Osborne, came from Corfu yesterday to see me—and Pietro and I dine this afternoon with the English Resident to meet him.—[10]

I hope that your philosophical studies will furnish you with a little patience—and all will go well by and bye.—[You may be sure that the moment I can join you again will be as welcome to me as at any period of our recollection.—There is nothing very attractive here to divide my attention—but I must attend to the Greek Cause both from honour and inclination.

Messrs. Browne and Trelawny are in the Morea—where they have been very well received— and both of them write in good spirits and hopes. I am anxious to hear how the Spanish Cause will be arranged—as I think that it may have an influence on the Greek Contest.——I wish that both were fairly and favourably settled—that I might return quietly to Italy—and talk over with you *our*, or rather Pietro's adventures—some of which are very amusing—as also some of the

* The nearest equivalent to this sentence is the French 'je m'en f . . s'.

incidents of our voyages and travels.—But I reserve them in the hope that we may laugh over them together at no very remote period.]—We must now get on horseback to ride over to Argostoli.—

Ever my dearest T. il tuo A.A. in E. + + + N.B.

This letter was followed by a note from Pietro, evidently written in answer to an anxious and unhappy letter from Teresa, and once more exhorting her to overcome her 'imaginary sufferings' by diligence in her philosophical studies, 'for leisure will be your worst enemy'. 'No danger', he added, 'attacks us or will attack us. Have confidence in our prudence.'

'Byron', the letter went on, 'is in excellent health, and whatever people say, I have noticed that he is much better when enduring hardships. Not that I would advise them, but I should like to convince you that he is not the worse for them, as you fear. . . .

You cannot imagine how much the European Gazettes make us laugh—the English and French ones, which sometimes arrive here, and talk about victories, battles, heroism. Oh, my Teresa, this is a veritable school of disillusion.'

As to Teresa herself, he surmised that she must have her hands full 'with G., the guileful Patrician, and with the priests. It is said here that Cardinal Della Genga has been elected Pope'.

The news was true, and, since the new Pope's views were supposed to be more liberal than those of his predecessor, Teresa had realized that this was the most likely moment for her to obtain redress. On October 15th she had addressed to the new Pope, Leo XII, a petition for the restoration of her allowance, pointing out that her husband had succeeded in obtaining its suspension from his predecessor 'by unknown means, but doubtless through calumnies and intrigues'. It was now, she added, more than a year since she had received a penny from her husband, so that 'she had added to all her other misfortunes, that of being wholly dependent upon her family', and she pleaded for an allowance 'suitable to her

noble birth and proportionate to the great riches of her husband'.[41] The slow, careful machinery of the Vatican was then set in motion. On January 6th, 1824, Cardinal Rusconi's secretary wrote to tell her that her husband had been interrogated about her allowance,* and at the beginning of March —presumably in an attempt to intimidate the old Count— Teresa's younger brother Ippolito, a boy of seventeen, forced his way into Palazzo Guiccioli. 'You promised an allowance to my sister, and as a man of honour you should keep your promise,' he shouted, as soon as he entered the courtyard, but the Count, taking him by the arm, led him politely into a sitting-room, and at the same time, 'being rather alarmed by his manner,' told one of his servants to keep within earshot. 'My dear young Count,' he then said to his fiery young brother-in-law, 'don't you see that for me to grant her an allowance is to go against a reunion which would be advantageous to us all!' 'A reunion!' said the boy rudely, 'with a man who has calumniated her! No, never! I did not come to treat with you, but—' Wherupon the Count, on the pretext of ringing for a glass of water, left the room, locked himself up in his study, and told his servants to inform Ippolito, 'as he seems to be mad', that he had left the house.[42]

Ippolito then went away, but not without a parting shot: 'I came to tell him that a new Rescript in favour of my sister has already been signed by the Court of Rome, and is expected here.'

Guiccioli at once sent off a most characteristic letter to his lawyer in Rome, Vincenzo Taglioni.

'I think it best to inform you that her father and brother Ippolito are strongly opposed to a reconciliation, under the pretext that I have calumniated her. I, however, think it likely that their opposition really comes from a wish to make money out of her. It is certain that up till now they have been receiving support from Lord Byron, and that also they have at present the advantage of having placed another brother,

* Gamba Papers. Letter dated January 6th, 1824, from Gioacchino Tridenti to Contessa Guiccioli.

Pietro, with him in Greece. Thus the family is relieved from all care and expenditure on his account, and perhaps they hope and expect as much for another brother, and still more besides, from Lord Byron. If to all that they can add a large allowance from me, they may be satisfied with their bargain.'[43]

The Count then proceeded to suggest that his lawyer should 'make these ideas the subject of consideration' in the Vatican. But meanwhile Cardinal Rusconi had already written to Teresa, stating her husband's accusations against her, and she had sent a long self-justificatory reply. Guiccioli's chief grounds for demanding the revocation of the allowance appear to have been Byron's visits to Filetto in 1820, his life with Teresa in Pisa, and Teresa's refusal to return to her husband, when he asked her to do so in 1822.

In reply to the first accusation, Teresa once again denied that she had ever seen Byron at Filetto, except in the presence of her father and brothers. And as to his coming to call—'What', she cried, 'could possibly have made her interpret the Pope's general clause about "honest behaviour" as forbidding the visits of one special individual?—and the one to whom, above all others, she owed the deepest obligation?' Lord Byron, she repeated, had saved her life by sending for Prof. Aglietti when her husband's avarice had refused to call in any consultant; he had undertaken all the expenses of Aglietti's visit, and later on of her convalescence at La Mira. Was it not natural, she pleaded, that, 'at a time when I needed comfort and friendship more than ever, owing to my sad situation, this generous man should come to see me?'

As to Byron's residence in Pisa, Teresa stoutly affirmed that he only came there to be near some of his compatriots and that she only saw him 'two or three times a week, for an hour, in the time which everyone gives to the conversazione'.

And finally, as to her letter to her husband from Pisa, her refusal to return to him was entirely due to the stories she had heard about the immoral life he was leading in her absence, and her knowledge of the incompatibility of their characters. 'How could I think that he would give so malicious and false an interpretation to my letter?'[44]

What the Cardinal thought on reading these disingenuous remarks, is not recorded. But the final decision of the Vatican was in Teresa's favour, for on April 6th—only a few days before Byron's death—Cardinal Rusconi himself informed her that her petition was granted: her allowance would be renewed, and the arrears paid.[45]

She had now, at least, regained a measure of independence. But, as the long months passed and Byron's letters became rarer and more meagre, her sense of hopelessness increased. To Lord Malmesbury, some years later, she said that at this time she was convinced that Byron had forgotten her.[46] For almost a month there was no further news—and when at last a letter came, the greater part of it, once again, was written by Pietro.

'You are right to be angry with us,' he began, 'for we have not written for at least 20 days—but also we have had no letters for over a month. I don't know how much longer we shall stay in this Island, for we are completely the slaves of circumstance. When we left Genoa we had no intention of landing here—when we landed we did not intend to stay more than a few days—now we have been here for four months—nor do I know when we shall get away. Don't complain about the post—or at least complain of Fortune—for I see that she is the ruler of our destines. Let no rumour or gossip distress you. You have nothing to dread but your own fancies. For the rest, put your trust in our prudence.'[47]

A postscript, written three days later, acknowledged the arrival of letters from Teresa, 'after almost two months of silence', and added

'We have been here in Metaxata for almost 3 months. You know that Byron puts down roots easily wherever he is, but by God, the circumstances here have so far been such that his immobility has been put down to the most profound *policy*—and rightly—for it would not be possible to act more prudently—nor to attain better results. Although the discussions that had been suspended in Greece, owing to his influence, have now begun again, our hopes for the Greeks are stronger than ever. However, they are and always will

remain the scum I have described to you. I believe that their master—the Turk—will no longer do for them—because he is no longer capable of keeping any servants, but should perhaps turn into one himself—but by God I wonder whether they will not need another master.* If they remain independent, it will be because nobody wants them—and those who might want them, will not be allowed to, by their friends.

We can't make any further plans yet, but be sure that when the opportunity offers we shall do all we can *so that your torments may have an end*—in so far as they lie in us, and no in your own brain.'

Byron's postscript brought little comfort:

9*brc* 29*th*, 1823

My dearest T.: What Pietro says is very reasonable, but we are at present so busy—that I have little time to write much in addition to his letter.

Here are arrived—English—Germans—Greeks—all kinds of people, in short—proceeding to or coming from Greece—and all with something to say to me—so that every day—I have to receive them here, or visit them in Argostoli.

The Greek affairs go on better—they have taken Corinth—and their fleet has had a victory near the Islands—but not in *these* waters. I still hope to see you in Spring—and in the mean time entreat you to quiet your apprehensions and believe me ever yr. a.a. in e + + + N.B.

P.S. I regret to see in the English papers that Colonel Fitz Gibbon brother to my particular friend *Lord Clare* has eloped from Ireland with the wife of a friend; the affair makes

* Here Pietro is echoing the opinion that Byron had expressed in a letter to Prince Mavrocordato: 'Greece is at present placed between three measures: either to reconquer her liberty, to become a dependence of the sovereigns of Europe, or to return to a Turkish province. She has the choice only of these three . . If she is desirous of the fate of Walachia and the Crimea, she may obtain it tomorrow; if only that of Italy, the day after; but if she wishes to become truly Greece, free and independent, she must resolve today.' GAMBA, op. cit., pp. 61-2.

much noise. The woman had four children and carried two with her.

Among the English people on their way to Greece, to whom Byron's letter refers, was Colonel Leicester Stanhope,[48] who had been sent out to Greece by the Greek Committee. An ardent Benthamite, he arrived at Argostoli full of enthusiastic ideas, which totally disregarded the existent chaotic conditions, for the immediate establishment of a Greek Republic. Byron, from the first, did not care for his 'Nabob airs', and had too much sense of reality to embrace his opinions. '"The typographical Colonel", as Lord Byron sarcastically termed him, seemed to think that newspapers would be more effectual in driving back the Ottomans than well-drilled troops and military tactics.'[49] After a few conversations with Byron and Colonel Napier, who strove to dispel in him some of the 'high-flown notions of the sixth form at Eton',[50] he crossed, early in December, to Missolonghi, taking with him letters from Byron to Mavrocordato and the Greek Government. These contained the warning that 'unless union and order are established, all the assistance which the Greeks could expect from abroad . . . will be suspended or destroyed. Allow me to add once for all—I desire the well-being of Greece and nothing else; I will do all I can to secure it; but I can consent. I never will consent, that the English public or English individuals should be deceived as to the real state of Greek affairs. The rest, Gentlemen, depends on you.'[51]

A copy of this letter was sent by Pietro, on the same day, to Teresa, with the comment she was to make any use of it she liked. Byron 'wished this letter of his to be known, so that, in the question of the loan, no unfair responsibilities should fall upon his shoulders, as usual.'

For another three weeks silence fell—and when Pietro wrote again, on December 14th, it was to complain that they had not heard from Teresa since the end of October. 'The winter', he added, 'has come upon us without our being aware of it. I hope you have resigned yourself [to wait]

until the spring.' As for themselves, he was at some pains to impress her with the patience they had been showing. 'For four months hermits upon these rocks! Can you believe in the *monkish virtues* of Byron? They are above all praise.'

Teresa may well have smiled wryly at this—and the best comment is provided by a letter from Byron himself to Barry.

'If these gentlemen . . . [the members of the Greek factions] discover my weak side, viz. a propensity to be governed and were to set a pretty woman, or a clever woman, about me with a turn for political or any other sort of intrigue,—why so they would make a fool of me, no very difficult matter probably, even without such an intervention. But if I can keep passion, at least that passion, out of the question (which may be the more easy, as I left my heart in Italy) they will not weather me with quite so much facility.'[62]

Byron's next letter to Teresa, however, must have slightly raised her spirits, since for the first time he referred to the possibility of her joining them.

BYRON TO CONTESSA GUICCIOLI

December 14th, 1823

Carissima Pettegola:* But I forgot that I must write to you English by your own request,- well!—here we are still—how long we may be so I cannot say. The Greek affairs go rather better—but I won't bore you with politics.

Perhaps in the Spring we shall be able to invite you to Zante to stay with the Grassettis'† and meet. I could come over and see you from the Morea or elsewhere. Or Pietro or I could run down to Ancona to convoy you hither. So you see—we think of your Excellency—and of your sentimental projects.

The Climate, up to this day, has been quite beautiful. Tuscany is Lapland in comparison—but today we have a high wind—and rain—but it is still as *warm* as your Primavera.

* 'Dearest gossip', but Teresa has tried to erase the word.

† Dr. Gaetano Grassetti was a doctor of Ravenna who had been obliged to fly from the Romagna in 1815, owing to having taken sides with the French. He was at that time living in Patras.

Pietro and I are occupied all day and every day with Greek business—and our correspondence already amounts to more volumes than that of Santa Chiara—even when your Eccellenza was in the course of your education.

Pietro is full of magnificent projects—and the Greeks also —many of which *commence,* and will, I presume, *end* (those Greeks I mean, for Pietro is more sparing than I of Fiddi) in asking me for some money.

There is a rumour that the Legislative Govt. of the Morea have named me jointly with Mavrocordato in some commission or other—but *which* or *what* I do not yet know,—and perhaps it is only a rumour.

For my part 'me-me ne etc. etc.' and leave them to project as they please—being neither ambitious nor enthusiastic on such points as you know—but always very much dearest T. your a.a in E. + N.B.

P.S.'' Greet Olimpia* from me as much and when you can and also Giulia and Laurina, not forgetting Papa and your two brothers. My respects to Costa and a thousand compliments to his good lady [*siora,* in Venetian dialect].

Yesterday I was caught in the rain and I *ache* . . . But it only temporary. Pietro has been ill (I will let *him* tell you of *what ailment*) but thanks to the attentions of our Italian doctor Bruno, who has been christened Brunetto Latini being rather pedantic, he is quite well again.

The preceding letter is mainly remarkable for the complete omission of the subject that was filling the writer's mind: his imminent departure for the Greek mainland. For Byron—whatever his inner misgivings—had realized that the moment for action had come. The Western Greeks (Mavrocordato's party) had at last succeeded in scoring some successes against the Turks; the Greek fleet, such as it was, had arrived in the waters of Missolonghi; the London Committee had sent a letter-press, some medical stores, some mechanical instruments and several trumpets ('but till we have an engineer and a trumpeter [they are] mere pearls to swine')[55]—and now both

* Olimpia, Giulia and Laurina were sisters of Teresa's.

Mavrocordato and Colonel Stanhope urged him to join them as soon as possible. 'Your counsels', wrote Mavrocordato, 'will be listened to like oracles. A great deal is expected of you', wrote Stanhope, 'both in the way of counsel and money.'[56] It was plain that the time had come to strike.

'You had better write to the Countess Guicioli', wrote Byron to Barry, 'to state that her brother and I are going to-morrow to Missolonghi, and that everything is *quite pacific*, as to the *business* we are upon. This perhaps is not the entire truth, but it is as much as needs to be stated to a woman who will naturally be anxious about her brother, etc.'[57]

So at last, on December 28th, in two ships—Byron in a small light 'mystico', and Pietro in a larger ship with the baggage—the party set sail for Missolonghi.

'The wind favourable, a clear sky, the air fresh but not too sharp. Our sailors sang alternately patriotic songs . . . and we took part in them. We were all, but Lord Byron particularly, in excellent spirits. The Mystico sailed the fastest. When the waves divided us and our voices could no longer reach each other, we made signals by firing pistols and carabines. Tomorrow we meet at Missolonghi—tomorrow.'[58]

As usual, however, Pietro's hopes were too high. The two lost sight of each other, and in the Gulf of Patras the mystico having sighted a Turkish frigate, was obliged to take refuge for three days at Dragomestre until the arrival of a Greek escort. Meanwhile Pietro, in the larger boat, had succeeded in getting himself captured,—together with Tita, Lega Zambelli, the horses, the stores, and Gamba's dollars—by another Turkish frigate, and only owing his life to the singularly fortunate circumstance that the commander of the frigate, Zacharia Bey, had once had his life saved from shipwreck by the Greek captain of Gamba's ship. So Zacharia Bey accepted Pietro's improbable story that he was merely a traveller proceeding to the island of Kalimnos, in the service of an English Lord, and towed him into Patras—where he visited the Pasha's divan, shot his woodcock—and reached